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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results and recommendations from a literature review, the purpose of which was to: (1) find the best structure and content for a core curricular assessment plan at Brenau Women's College (Georgia); and (2) determine a reasonable evaluation plan of the core curricular assessment plan once it is implemented. The literature also sought to trace the evolution of the outcomes assessment movement, locate literature on the Southern Association's institutional effectiveness criteria, and determine the current practices among five other institutions. Additionally, Brenau records were examined to determine the college's current direction. An assessment plan was developed that ultimately contained a goal statement, nine assumptions, eight assessment elements, and a plan for both formative and summative evaluation of the plan. It was also determined that the plan appeared to respond to the college's mission. The literature review concluded that an assessment should have both external accountability and internal improvement foci; that there is no single correct approach; that predictable pitfalls require attention; and that standardized testing and portfolio assessment has both advantages and disadvantages. Recommendations are presented. Appendices include the taxonomy of outcomes for the college core curriculum, interview questions and summaries, and Brenau's core curriculum assessment plan. Contains a 108-item bibliography. (GLR)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CORE CURRICULUM OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR BRENAU WOMEN'S COLLEGE

by

Patricia Webster Robinson

A Major Applied Research Project presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

October 1991

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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CORE CURRICULUM OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR BRENAU WOMEN'S COLLEGE

BY

Patricia Webster Robinson

October 1991

Advisor: Valda Robinson, Ed.D.

A small college faced with Southern Association mandates to demonstrate institutional effectiveness had a critical need to develop an institutional plan for core outcomes and program assessment. Such was the purpose of this study. Two primary research questions sought to discover the best structure and content for a core assessment plan and a reasonable plan for evaluation of the plan once implemented.

The literature on outcomes assessment served as a primary source of guidance for the development of the plan. The evolution of the outcomes assessment movement and prevailing definitions of key terms were researched; literature on the Southern Association's institutional effectiveness criteria were studied; and current practice among other institutions was explored. Brenau records were reviewed and administrators interviewed to determine

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the college's current direction. Finally, literature on program assessment was researched. Subsequently, a plan was developed, then reviewed and revised by the faculty Assessment Committee, ultimately containing a statement of goal, nine assumptions, eight assessment elements and a plan for both formative and summative evaluation of the plan.

It was concluded from the study that assessment had both external accountability and internal improvement foci; that there was no single correct approach; that predictable pitfalls required attention; that standardized testing and portfolio assessment both had advantages and disadvantages; and that Brenau's plan appeared to respond to the College's mission and SACS criteria.

It was recommended that the administration adopt and disseminate the plan; that an Institutional Effectiveness Overview Committee be formed to better coordinate assessment and institutional research efforts; that related faculty development opportunities be offered; and that Brenau's outcomes be reorganized into a more manageable format.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this Major Applied Research Project to my precious children, Tripper, Danny and Jessica, whose love, patience and faith made the journey possible and worthwhile.

Abstract of a Major Applied Research Project Presented to Nova University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CORE CURRICULUM OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR BRENAU WOMEN'S COLLEGE

By

Patricia Webster Robinson

August 1991

Brenau College, like most institutions of higher education today, has faced accreditation association mandates to demonstrate institutional effectiveness particularly in its educational programs. The development of meaningful measures of student outcomes had become critically important both for major programs and the overall core curriculum. Since the core did not have any single departmental identity, it was especially important that an institutional plan for core outcomes and program assessment be developed. The development of such a plan was the purpose of this MARP. The two primary research questions were: What is the best structure and content for a core curricular assessment plan at Brenau Women's College? What is a reasonable plan for evaluation of the core curricular assessment plan once it is implemented?

An extensive body of literature on outcomes assessment had developed over the previous five to ten years and served as a primary source of guidance for the development

of Brenau's plan. The evolution of the outcomes assessment movement was investigated; prevailing definitions of the terms assessment, accountability, outcomes and institutional effectiveness were researched, particularly with respect to core curricula; literature on the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' institutional effectiveness criteria were studied and SACS personnel interviewed; and current practice among other institutions was explored and analyzed for applicability to Brenau. In addition, five institutions were directly investigated by telephone interview to obtain insight into their current efforts in core curriculum assessment. Subsequently, Brenau records were reviewed and administrators interviewed to determine Brenau's current status and direction vis a vis core curriculum assessment. And finally, literature on program assessment was researched to assist in development of a plan to evaluate the plan itself.

Based on the results of the aforementioned inquiries, a plan was developed to assess student outcomes in the various components of the Brenau core curriculum, as well as to assess the core program in its entirety. Following reviews and revision in the faculty Assessment Committee, the final plan contained the following elements: a statement of goal, nine assumptions, eight assessment elements with subcategories, and a plan for evaluation of the plan once implemented. The plan for evaluation called for annual formative reviews by department chairs and the

Dean, annual core portfolio review interviews by the Assessment Committee faculty, and annual reviews of the results of the projected core questionnaire, with results of all the aforementionned reported to the Dean and ultimately the faculty at each fall faculty retreat. Projected summative evaluation of the Core Curricular Assessment Plan called for core assessment plan review as part of each five year disciplinary analysis process as well as part of each ten year reaccreditation review. The Brenau Core Curricular Assessment Plan underwent its first formative evaluation immediately following development via the faculty Assessment Committee, as well as by a visiting SACS reaccreditation committee.

Six conclusions resulted from the study. Assessment was perceived to have a dual focus of external accountability and internal improvement. Core curricular assessment was viewed as having no single correct approach. Predictable pitfalls required attention in any core assessment plan. Standardized testing and portfolio assessment both had advantages and disadvantages. Portfolios appeared to address the disadvantages of standardized tests. Finally, Brenau's plan appeared to respond to the College's mission, to address key assessment issues, utilized a variety of measurements, responded to SACS criteria, and provided flexibility for adaptation over time as results of assessment and changing needs of the institution were periodically evaluated.

Eight recommendations evolved from the study. They were that the Brenau administration formally adopt the plan as developed; that the plan be disseminated to all Brenau faculty and that review meetings be scheduled; that an Institutional Effectiveness Overview Committee be formed; that the Brenau assessment and institutional research efforts be better coordinated particularly with respect to database management; that various faculty development opportunities be offered to support assessment plans and goals; that Brenau consider a reorganization of its core curricular outcomes into a more succinct and manageable format; that this study and its findings be shared with SACS; and that the study and its findings be shared further via topical papers submitted to regional and national forums on assessment and institutional research.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In a period of economic recession and retrenchment, most institutions of higher education today find themselves faced with mandates to demonstrate institutional effectiveness (Halpern, Diane, 1987; Folger and Harris, 1989). Such pressures come from state governments, the federal government and regional accrediting associations, all prompted by widespread public concern about the cost and product of American higher education today (Alexander and Stark, 1986).

These concerns, loudly voiced in the decade of the 1980s, led to the development of the outcomes assessment movement which has spread broadly across American higher education with widely diverse results. "Institutional effectiveness" and "assessment" became higher education buzzwords with an ever growing body of literature as well as numerous national, state and local conferences and workshops devoted to the topic over the past five to seven years. Although much progress is cited with respect to wider understanding of the concept of assessment, and many experiments have been tried, many institutions are just beginning to organize an institutional effectiveness, outcomes assessment effort. Fortunately, many more models exist today than a decade or even five years ago, and many institutions have been willing to publish and share their experiences, both successes and failures, to the advantage

of newcomers.

Consistently cited in the literature as a first step in effective assessment is the importance of defining institutional mission and/or purpose (Nichols, 1989; Ewell, 1988). The development of educational goals and outcome statements based on that mission/purpose is a key second step. Aspects of institutional distinctiveness are cited as particularly important to consider in developing outcomes (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988). Once identified, the educational outcomes must be woven into the curriculum and means of assessing their successful attainment developed. Such educational program assessment must address outcomes in both the major programs of study as well as the general education program of an institution. Major programs will generally have a departmental support locus, although this is not the case with general education. Therefore core curriculum outcomes assessment represents a special challenge to organize as it has no natural or obvious departmental "home." Such is the case at Brenau College. This study was designed to review the available literature, interview a sampling of practitioners, and develop a plan of core curricular assessment and ongoing plan evaluation for Brenau Women's College.

Statement of the Problem

In a period of economic recession and retrenchment, Brenau College, like most of higher education and

particularly private higher education, has been challenged to operate more efficiently and effectively to survive. Pressure from the regional accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), to demonstrate institutional effectiveness, gave further impetus to the College to develop measures of accountability, particularly with respect to educational programs which are its primary "raisons d'etre".

To demonstrate effectiveness, a well designed plan of student outcomes and program assessment was needed, particularly with respect to the core curriculum which was spread across various departments. This study developed a core curricular assessment plan to meet not only the SACS criteria but also to enhance the teaching/learning experience at Brenau Women's College and thus to better realize the stated mission of the College.

Background and Significance

Brenau College is a private, four year institution founded in 1878 and located in Gainesville, Georgia, (Brenau College, 1990). Originally a women's college, Brenau now has two collegiate divisions: The Women's College and the Professional College. The Women's College consists primarily of residential young women of traditional age (eighteen to twenty-two years) attending daytime classes offered from eight AM to four PM. About a third of the approximately five hundred Women's College students are commuters, with about fifty of those being

women of nontraditional age (Brenau Registrar's Office, 1990). The Professional College, established in the 1970s, offers coeducational evening, weekend, and off-campus programs and currently enrolls about 1600 students. Most of these are working adults attending Brenau's Professional College part-time (Brenau Registrar's Office, 1990). This study concerns itself only with the curriculum and student population of The Women's College of Brenau.

Like most institutions of higher education today, Brenau finds itself faced with mandates to demonstrate institutional effectiveness, and more specifically within the academic programs, to measure program delivery and student attainment of their advertised academic outcomes. The outcomes assessment movement nationally received a major thrust from the 1983 A Nation at Risk report which was among the first of a series of national commentaries critical of the deplorable state of the American system of education, the skill and knowledge level of its graduates at all levels, the performance of its teachers, and the negative impact that such a system has upon the nation's economy and international competitiveness (National Commission, 1983).

A Nation at Risk (National Commission, 1983) was followed by a number of other texts including NIE's Involvement in Learning (Study Group, 1984), NEH's To Reclaim a Legacy (Bennett, 1984), the AAC's Integrity in the College Curriculum (Project, 1985), the AASCU (1986)

report To Secure the Blessings of Liberty and in 1987 Ernest Boyer's College. Politicians and government officials at both the state and national levels responded to these public cries for quality and accountability and led efforts to champion educational reform (Bennett, 1985; National Governors, 1987). Since higher education had made little self-imposed progress, the federal government took the initiative by barring federal aid to institutions that were not accredited by agencies requiring documentation of institutional effectiveness in their degree programs (Federal Register, 1987). This in turn led to the development and imposition of new outcomes effectiveness measures being required of member institutions by the regional accrediting commissions.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), which accredits schools in the state of Georgia, has taken the lead in this national movement, and has established institutional effectiveness criteria which must be met by all members when applying for reaccreditation (SACS, 1989-1990). The criteria state that member institutions "have an obligation to all constituents to evaluate effectiveness and use results in a broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation process" (SACS, 1989-1990:13). Specifically, SACS (1989-1990:14) requires institutions to "define expected educational results and describe how the achievement of these results will be ascertained." Finally, SACS asks its members to describe

how they will use the results of their evaluations to improve institutional effectiveness.

Brenau College, recognizing the implications of this national movement and its potential impact, particularly with reaccreditation looming in the year 1991, began in 1983 to study assessment, curricular reform, and a variety of related issues through its Core Curriculum Review Committee. Consultants were invited to the College, and faculty from Brenau were sent to observe model programs like Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Other faculty attended conferences and workshops on the subject. A series of Disciplinary Analyses were completed in 1985 and by 1986 a new general education program design, focusing on outcomes and projecting assessment of both the outcomes and the process of producing the outcomes, was adopted (Brenau College Assessment Center, 1991).

In 1987, thirteen committees began to develop outcome statements for the three skills areas, nine knowledge areas, and the values clarification area which had been identified by the faculty as essential to the core curriculum of every graduate. Once the outcomes were approved, the existing core was reviewed and courses redesigned and reorganized to implement the skill and content objectives. The new core was introduced in large part in the fall of 1989. However, specific means of assessing the agreed upon outcomes of the new core were

still pending. And no specific plan was in place for assessing the core's effectiveness overall.

As the 1990 academic year began, a further reorganization of the Women's College Core reflected a response to scheduling problems encountered by both faculty and students faced with the three, four, and five credit hour mixture of courses that had been used to implement the outcomes of the 1989 core curriculum reform. With the delivery format further refined, the need remained to determine and initiate the means of measuring/verifying the outcomes of the core, and decide how to use that knowledge to improve the curriculum on an ongoing basis. In short, with outcomes identified, it was time to really "assess." Choices between nationally normed vs. in-house developed tests, rising junior/literacy skills evaluation vs. an emphasis on core knowledge assessment, portfolio evaluation vs. testing in general all had to be considered and studied. It became evident that a centralized and coordinated effort and plan to assess the core curriculum of the Women's College of Brenau was needed.

Research Questions

The critical issue in this study was the determination of appropriate content and methodologies for a plan to assess the core curricular outcomes at Brenau Women's College. Since desired outcomes of the core had been established by the faculty, a means of ascertaining to what degree those outcomes were being achieved under the current

curricular design and delivery format was important in documenting institutional effectiveness. Exactly how, when and what to assess, as well as how to evaluate the effectiveness of the resulting plan, become the principle questions requiring investigation. Thus the major research questions were:

A. What is the most suitable structure and content for a core curricular assessment plan at Brenau Women's College?

B. What is a reasonable plan for evaluation of such a core curricular assessment plan once it is implemented?

The following subquestions sought to guide the process of developing a core curricular assessment plan and a plan for plan evaluation at Brenau Women's College.

1. What does the literature suggest as the major background factors leading to the outcomes assessment movement in higher education in the 1980s and which might impact the development of Brenau's plan?

2. What are the prevailing definitions of assessment, outcomes, accountability, and institutional effectiveness in higher education and what are seen as the various purposes and levels of assessment? How do the definitions, purposes, and levels apply to core curriculum assessment at Brenau?

3. How do SACS criteria relate to outcomes assessment in the core curriculum?

4. What are other colleges in the United States doing to assess core curricular outcomes and their general education programs overall?

5. What has Brenau's administration established as initial guidelines for core curricular assessment?

6. What general education/core curriculum assessment efforts exist already in the Women's College that might contribute to an ongoing plan and to eventual plan evaluation?

7. What basic assumptions and major questions should be addressed in initiating the development of a core assessment plan at Brenau based on the investigations outlined above (1-6)?

8. What general categories and specific elements of core assessment appear to be appropriate to Brenau to constitute a draft plan based on the literature reviews, interviews conducted, administrative feedback, and assessment file reviews?

9. What feedback from the Brenau Assessment Committee in response to an initial draft plan could contribute to the formulation of a final proposed plan for core assessment and plan evaluation?

10. What does the literature suggest should be included in a final plan as effective means of plan evaluation once the plan itself is implemented?

11. What formative evaluation of the final plan could be obtained from the Brenau Assessment Committee and from members of the SACS reaffirmation committee for eventual consideration in further refining the plan?

Definition of Terms

Terms used throughout this study are defined as follows:

1. **Accountability.** The concept that institutions have a responsibility to those who provide them with support/resources to demonstrate that institutional goals, particularly in terms of student learning and development, are being achieved in a cost effective manner.

2. **Assessment.** The process of gathering data on educational outcomes and assembling evidence into an interpretable form for some intended use. The purposes of assessment can be to enhance teaching/learning and/or for external accountability. Assessment may take place at the

individual student level, the program level, or the institutional level. Student outcomes assessment and core curriculum program assessment are the major assessment foci of this study.

3. **Core Curriculum.** The general education component of a student's program of study, required of all graduates regardless of major. Generally implied are common knowledge areas such as fine arts, history, literature, social and natural sciences, foreign language and skills such as computation, writing, reading and effective speech. Critical thinking and value/attitude development are likewise common elements, though infinite variations in both content and prescription exist in higher education. At Brenau, the core is prescribed rather than a series of distribution requirements such as at many other colleges. Brenau's core includes thirteen faculty approved outcomes areas, broadly grouped into knowledge, skills and values as outlined in Appendix A. The specific courses designed to deliver the core outcomes are outlined in Appendix B.

4. **General Education.** For purposes of this study, used interchangeably with the term "core curriculum" and includes "liberal arts" courses.

5. **Institutional Effectiveness.** An institution's ability to perform its mission effectively, to accomplish desired effects; a commitment toward accomplishment of the institutional statement of purpose. Effectiveness is institutionally specific.

6. **Major.** A student's chosen field of specialization for the baccalaureate degree, with all its specified course and activity requirements. Major requirements may be contrasted with core curricular requirements for graduation.

7. **Outcomes.** Changes that occur as a result of a student's enrollment in an educational institution and participation in its programs, that may be viewed as the measured differences between entry characteristics and characteristics on exit from college. Change may refer to cognitive, affective, psychological or behavioral.

The following abbreviations are commonly used in the literature and throughout this study and are defined below:

1. **AAHE.** American Association for Higher Education.
2. **ACT.** American College Testing Program.
3. **ACT COMP.** College Outcomes Measures Project.
4. **ACT CAAP.** Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency.
5. **ECS.** Education Commission of the States.
6. **ETS.** Educational Testing Service.
7. **NCHEMS.** National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.
8. **SACS.** Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Assumptions

It was assumed that the feedback requested and received from the Assessment Committee, administrators of Brenau, SACS personnel, and experts consulted from other institutions was honest, competent and complete. The worth

of the plan ultimately developed was based upon the reliability, validity, and completeness of the feedback obtained during development.

Limitations

This plan may not be applicable in its entirety to other institutions seeking to initiate a core curriculum assessment program. Applicability may be limited largely to small, private liberal arts institutions with missions, budgets, and personnel restraints similar to Brenau.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Assessment is not a new idea in American higher education. Assessment, evaluation, and a concern for quality have existed for years. A unique focus of the 1980s, however, was the emphasis on assessing and measuring the real or behavioral outcomes of the higher educational experience, concentrating on accountability, cost effectiveness as well as overall institutional effectiveness. These new factors, combined with the external forces which in recent years prompted their emergence, do not appear to be a "fading fancy" as higher education enters the decade of the 1990s. The following is a review of the various national studies and other publications which emerged in response to public outcries for educational reform in the last decade and which continue to direct the forward progress of the outcomes assessment movement in higher education.

Overview of the Outcomes Assessment Movement in the 1980s

The term assessment has come to imply a whole range of ideas, procedures and concepts which seek to address the issues related to quality and accountability in the higher education process. A series of occurrences in the 1980s can with hindsight be identified as important factors which combined to result in this largely unanticipated, spontaneous, yet powerful and rapidly growing movement.

At the root of much of the public criticism of American higher education in the eighties was the decline of American economic strength and international competitiveness. Concern with the preparation of the labor force, with product quality, and with the United States' inability to compete with the technology and products of foreign nations has resulted in a large portion of the blame being placed squarely on the American educational systems. Naisbitt in his 1984 edition of Megatrends states that with "school turning out an increasingly inferior product, corporations have reluctantly entered the education business (and) . . . now operate remedial courses in basic math and English." And this occurs just when offices are demanding more highly skilled workers (Naisbitt, 1984: 26).

National reports on the state of American education in general have been an important factor in instigating public outcry for educational reform across the board in recent years. Perhaps the most well-known of these commentaries is the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk. An investigation of the declining state of the American educational system, it was well publicized and increased public awareness and concern for mediocrity in the system and for the low levels of knowledge and skill performance of graduates who leave American high schools ready for neither college nor work.

Additional reports focusing specifically on the current state of American higher education followed A Nation at Risk (National Commission, 1983). The National Institute of Education (NIE) responded to concern about the quality of college education by convening a study group to recommend ways to improve baccalaureate education. Their final report, Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education (Study Group, 1984), strongly recommends the systematic assessment of student knowledge and skill development over the college years. Moreover, they suggest that assessment be used to evaluate and improve advising, curriculum, and student programming.

The Association of American Colleges (AAC) likewise published a report in 1985 entitled Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community, written by the Project on Redefining the Meaning and Scope of Baccalaureate Degrees. Pointing out that baccalaureate education "makes a vital contribution to the health of American democracy" the report echoes earlier national commission reports on deficiencies in undergraduate study in the humanities, foreign language and international studies, and in science education, warning that "persistence of such weaknesses would soon undermine public confidence in higher education. . . ." (Project on Redefining, 1985: p.i). Underlying the efforts of the AAC Project was the belief that "piecemeal reform of undergraduate education had failed to check the

deterioration in its condition, and hence a more fundamental, comprehensive approach to the problem was needed" (Project, 1985: p. ii). Emphasizing the issue of accountability, the AAC report points to an "absence of traditions, practices, and methods of institutional and social accountability" in American higher education, an absence which has been supported by the national spirit of freedom and individual enterprise but which has resulted in a great deal of irresponsibility (Project, 1985: 33).

Complicating the issue of accountability in higher education today is the range and diversity of students entering college as improved access increases. Ewell (1985b: 9) points out that "as the number and complexion of institutions have changed, so have the characteristics of students." Dramatic shifts in birth rates, age group distribution, geographic mobility, and immigration have heavily impacted the system. Particularly the non-traditional student and increased minority populations have imposed new pressures on colleges and universities to develop new delivery systems, new programs, new marketing approaches and new quality control mechanisms.

On the issue of quality control, the AAC report (Project, 1985:33) states, "There must be ways of demonstrating to state legislatures, students, and the public at large that the colleges know what they are doing (or do not know) and that they are doing it well (or poorly.) The colleges themselves must be held responsible

for developing evaluations that the public can respect." According to the AAC (Project, 1985) the job cannot be done unless institutions assess what skills and knowledge students possess at entrance. Likewise an accurate sense of progress via adequate assessment procedures as well as hard evidence at graduation of the cumulative difference the curriculum made in a student's capacity are both cited by the AAC report (Project, 1985) as fundamental. Such student assessments combined with program evaluation are recommended as a necessary and continuous process.

A Nation at Risk (National Commission, 1983), the NIE (Study Group, 1984) and the AAC (Project, 1985) reports were joined by a number of other commentaries and publications on the state of American higher education including Boyer's 1986 book, College: The Undergraduate Experience in America (sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching), and the AASCU study, To Secure the Blessings of Liberty (AASCU, 1986). Hirsch published his bestseller, Cultural Literacy in 1987 further emphasizing the general knowledge gap of young Americans. These numerous critical evaluations did not go unnoticed in the political arena. The National Governor's Association in 1987 recommended that "state attention . . . be directed to the outcomes of the higher education system - namely, measuring how much students learn in college" (National Governors, 1987: 156).

This leadership role being taken by the states was likewise evidenced in the July 1986 report of the Education Commission of the States entitled Transforming the State Role in Undergraduate Education. In the absence of initiative on the part of most colleges and universities themselves, governors and state legislatures began to demand assessment initiatives in state financed institutions to document the outcomes and productivity of their programs. Johnson and Marcus (1986: 26) indicate that accountability in the eyes of legislators and governors is no longer limited to fiscal audit but also encompasses program and performance review, educational results, and effectiveness. The purse string incentive is seen as a means to eliminate duplication as well as to ensure quality and diversity and to protect the student consumer.

Nichols (1989) describes how the federal government has added its own incentives to the reform movement as well. By adopting provisions that bar federal student aid to institutions not accredited by agencies requiring documentation of the effectiveness of their programs, the federal government has forced regional accrediting boards to develop and impose new measures of outcomes and effectiveness in addition to their traditional criteria for accreditation.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) took the lead among regional accrediting agencies in

responding to this federal mandate as well as to the general state of public discontent with the product of higher education. In December of 1984 the College Delegate Assembly of the Southern Association adopted the proposed criterion on Institutional Effectiveness which would require institutions to focus on educational and other institutional results in addition to the traditional focus on inputs and process criteria. It was envisioned that outcomes assessment should allow a feedback loop to identify areas of needed improvement not only in academic programming but also in the quality of student services, in goal setting, and in long range strategic planning. Such a model as described by Folger and Harris (1989) would require institutions to set out a clear purpose and to focus on it, provide a distinctive service, be efficient, cost effective, and evaluate services and results frequently. By adding the criterion on institutional effectiveness, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association joined the numerous specialized professional associations which had developed outcomes standards and measures in the 1970s.

Under SACS guidelines and consistent with the philosophy of institutional diversity, institutions "have a great deal of autonomy in deciding what to assess and . . how to assess outcomes" (Folger and Harris, 1989: 8). The goal of the SACS evaluation process is to guide and help improvement efforts. Effectiveness and improvement as an

emphasis in accreditation may be contrasted with state emphasis on accountability. Folger and Harris (1989) discuss the potential for conflict between these two foci, and the dangers and potential of "compliance responses" in both cases.

Although quality, effectiveness, and outcomes in higher education converged as a major focus for concern in the decade of the 1980s, growing concern was evident through the earlier decade. Astin wrote extensively on the impact of college in Four Critical Years: Effects of College on Beliefs, Attitudes, and Knowledge (1977), Academic Gamesmanship: Student Oriented Change in Higher Education (1976), and "Measuring the Outcomes of Higher Education" (1974). Bowen contributed to and edited Evaluating Institutions for Accountability in 1974 and wrote "Outcome Data and Educational Decision Making" in 1977 as well as Investment in Learning in 1980. In 1979 Pace contributed Measuring Outcomes of College: 50 Years of Findings and Recommendations for the Future. Three Thousand Futures, published in 1980 by the Carnegie Council, addressed population shifts, budgetary restrictions and funding shifts, everchanging student bodies, and labor market changes, recommending assessment of institutional needs in preparation for the future. Also in the seventies Alverno College took an early lead in the outcomes assessment movement with its innovative competency-based curriculum. Individual assessment of

students began in 1973 at Alverno with program evaluation implemented in 1976. Motivated by threats to their survival as a Catholic women's liberal arts school, the outcomes oriented approach was Alverno's solution to finding distinction in a competitive market (Alverno, 1985). Alverno thus became the laboratory and leader in student outcomes assessment long before it came into vogue.

Banta (1989b) has suggested that the assessment movement, having finally passed the consciousness - raising phase, has now entered an intensive implementation stage. Institutions are experimenting with various methods and some have even entered the change process known as "institutionalization" (Banta, 1989b: 3). The trap of assessing to the criteria rather than using assessment to effect true improvement in all institutional processes remains a danger, says Banta (1989b). It would seem to suggest that some institutions and educators still believe assessment to be a passing fad.

Despite the many reform voices that have sounded from academia, Folger and Harris (1989) reiterate that the real upsurge of interest in higher educational reform has come primarily from outside academia, from citizens, and state and national leaders. Business and governmental leaders alike have criticized higher education for its lack of good management, for its growth and greater cost in the absence of any evidence of improvement. They have remained skeptical of higher education's claims for autonomy. Yet

the renewed interest in higher education reform in the 1980s would appear to reflect the public belief in the importance of education to social and economic progress as well as to American competitiveness in a global economy. It would also suggest that assessment of outcomes and accountability to the public for effective results in higher education are not going to disappear as public demands in the near future.

Definitions, Purposes and Levels in Assessment

Several interrelated terms used frequently in the assessment literature merit consideration and defining. Variations in meaning and usage abound for the words (1) assessment, (2) outcomes, (3) accountability, and (4) institutional effectiveness. Likewise, the literature contains discussions of distinct purposes of assessment, each having a different bearing upon assessment approaches or methodologies most appropriate to a given institution. Finally, there are various levels of outcomes assessment focused upon in different studies which merit clarification and differentiation.

Terenzini has stated that one of the greatest obstacles "to the advancement of the assessment agenda at the national level is the absence of any consensus on precisely what assessment means" (1989a: 646). The term is used variously to refer to testing of individual student achievement levels, to a review of general or liberal education programs, to a series of surveys of alumni or

perhaps employers, or finally it may refer to "nothing less than institution-wide self-study. . . Lack of clarity about exactly what this term means on a campus constitutes a significant threat to the success of any assessment effort" (Tereznini, 1989a: 646).

Alexander and Stark (1986) suggest the term assessment holds varied meanings for various parties, and is often used interchangeably with the terms "evaluation" and "measurement." However, these authors sight subtle differences among the terms, pointing out that

> Assessment is the process of gathering data and assembling evidence into an interpretable form for some intended use. . . . Measurement, therefore, is only a part of the assessment process, and is not necessarily synonymous with assessment, whereas evaluation implies judgments based on the collated measures (Alexander and Stark, 1986: 5).

Krotseng (1989) suggests that with so many tests in existence now, many in academe think the term "assessment" means testing alone, when in reality testing is just one highly visible element of the assessment process. She states the reason for assessment should be to analyze an institution's intended and actual educational outcomes. Expanding on Krotseng's view, Howard (1989: 78) asserts that "Institutional assessment implies that all components of the institutions review their effectiveness in meeting their goals and objectives."

Nichols (1989: 109) points out that "The Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education (1984) emphasized assessment as a means of

feedback to improve teaching and learning." The group placed great importance on the involvement of faculty in the design and implementation of assessment programs, seeing faculty as the natural experts on both program and individual student expected outcomes.

Montgomery (1989: 55) cites Edgerton in stating that "Assessment combines the testing of knowledge with the application or the using of that knowledge." Montgomery further suggests that the assessment of student achievement can be pursued in many ways including surveys of faculty and students, alumni surveys, investigations of grading patterns, exit surveys of a graduating class, and employer surveys.

At Alverno College, the faculty cite the literal origin of the term "assess" as meaning to sit down beside. In its development, they say, the "term has come to mean careful judgment based on the kind of close observation that comes from sitting down beside" (Alverno, 1985:1). Alverno's (1985: 1) ultimate definition for assessment is "a multidimensional attempt to observe and, on the basis of criteria, to judge the individual learner in action."

Banta (1988: 1) states "Despite all the interest in assessment and the pressure to accomplish it, it is difficult to define assessment precisely." For her book she defined outcomes assessment as "collecting evidence of (1) student performance on specified measures of

development, (2) program strengths and weaknesses, and (3) institutional effectiveness."

In The Self-Regarding Institution (1984: 7) Ewell defines assessment as "the systematic examination of educational outcomes." Through assessment, he says, an institution identifies critical areas for future action, the first step in self improvement.

Davis (1989) discusses assessment in terms of broad and narrow viewpoints prevalent in the literature. She contrasts the broad definition used by Boyer and Ewell in 1988 as "processes that provide information about individual students, about curricula or programs, about institutions or about entire systems of institutions," with the narrower view of assessment "specifically tied to students learning, knowledge, skills, and outcomes" as described by Marchese, Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (Davis, 1989: 7). This latter view, according to Davis, focuses on the extent to which students have met curricular goals, mastered prescribed subject matter, and acquired the skills essential to an educated person. In an effort to reduce confusion in the terminology, some researchers like Banta (1988) speak about "outcomes assessment" when referring to assessment and student performance. But as Davis (1989: 7) points out, "many writers simply use the term assessment as shorthand notation for measuring student achievement and development."

Terenzini (1989b: 35) suggests keeping two questions in mind when discussing assessment in order to clarify its meaning.

1. What is the focus of the assessment? (Is its purpose to enhance teaching/learning, or for accountability to some external body?)

2. What is to be the unit or level of assessment? (Is it individual students OR is it groups, referring to groups at course, program, department or campus level?)

Tereznini (1989b) suggests a two by two matrix to categorize the four varying forms of assessment that potentially result from the answers to these two key questions.

Depending upon one's use of the broad or the narrow definition of assessment, and depending upon the level or unit of assessment targeted, the term outcome, or student outcomes assessment, will often vary in meaning in the literature as well. Alexander and Stark (1986) review various definitions of outcomes. They cite Pace's 1979 definition of outcomes as "changes that are widely accepted as goals of higher education and that are the result of events and experiences in college designed to help students attain these goals" (Alexander and Stark, 1986:3). Astin's value-added approach to outcomes, according to Alexander and Stark (1986: 3), specifies that "outcomes are the measured differences between entry characteristics of a student and the characteristics of a student on exit from college." These authors suggest Ewell's 1983 definition of outcomes coincides with Astin's, defining outcomes "as any

change or consequence that occurs as a result of enrollment in an educational institution and participation in its programs" (Alexander and Stark, 1986: 3).

Ewell (1983) has stated that the term "student outcome" has been used by quite different people for many different purposes. Research scholars, college administrators, student-personnel professionals, and state governing boards all use the expression, but may variably be referring to short-term cognitive development, long-term changes in behavior, retention or graduation rates, favorable job placement or graduate school acceptance, or perhaps individual student successes or failures. Despite the fact that the approaches to student outcomes may be roughly divided into academic, student-personnel, or management perspectives, nevertheless, according to Ewell, they all deal with the same phenomenon, the impact of college on students.

The American College Testing Program (ACT, 1990: 2) in its 1990 document, College Assessment Planning, offers the following definition of outcomes assessment: "a process of describing the effects of curriculum and instruction in order to improve performance (of students, faculty, programs and institutions.)" In contrast, Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (1987: 19) define student outcomes as "the wide range of phenomena that can be influenced by the educational experience." Their definition reflects a concern with the overall impact of the college environment

on students, not solely the planned or expected effects of a program.

Defining student outcomes as the enhancement of student talents in distinctive ways, Ewell and Lisensky (1988: 26) identify four basic dimensions of outcomes. They are:

1. cognitive, distinguishing general and specialized knowledge;
2. skills, distinguishing general skills from specific functions of a profession/occupation;
3. attitudes/values; and
4. relationships later after college, or college's impact on subsequent behavior.

In Assessing Educational Outcomes (1985a: 3), Ewell states "there are about as many different typologies of student outcomes as there are individuals who have investigated the field," but a number of common distinctions are made in nearly all of them. These include the distinction between cognitive (gains in knowledge) and affective outcomes (changes in attitudes or values); psychological (changes in the student's head) vs. behavioral outcomes (observable changes during or after college); within-college or after college outcomes (when they occur). According to Ewell (1985a), assessments of learning gains are usually cognitive, psychological and within college.

Echoing Ewell, Halpern (1987: 3) maintains that "The purpose of student outcomes assessment is to provide an index of what and how much students are learning." She points out that, though assessment programs vary in

objective and uses, most have focused on student gains in cognitive development, knowledge base, and various attitudes associated with college education. Halpern's definition of student outcomes assessment includes Astin's concept of value-added, and refers to the outcomes of higher education as reflecting educational gains when appropriate comparisons are made between freshmen and seniors.

Nichols (1989:4), in his handbook on outcomes assessment, states that "outcomes assessment, more than many other processes in higher education, must be tuned to each particular campus environment." He suggests assessment only occurs after an institution has clarified and refined its statement of purpose and departments have clearly formulated goals and objectives. Nichol's approach includes student outcomes assessment within an overall program of institutional effectiveness.

Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (1987) likewise perceive student outcomes assessment as a means of demonstrating institutional effectiveness. They envision assessment as a means to indicate "institutional strengths and weaknesses and thereby point to directions for improvement" (Jacobi, Astin and Ayala, 1987: 1).

What then are the prevailing definitions of "institutional effectiveness" that impact the student outcomes assessment movement? Montgomery (1989: 60) defines institutional effectiveness as "effective

instruction for students, good nonclass educational opportunities, good use of resources, effective management. In short, it is the ability to cause an institution to perform its mission effectively." Taylor (1989: 12) suggests institutional effectiveness "in the most general sense, is the degree to which an institution accomplishes desired effects."

Nichols (1989:3) defines institutional effectiveness as a concept that includes the assessment of student outcomes but which "extends beyond that important activity by placing the assessment of student outcomes as the focal point of an institution's commitment toward accomplishment of its statement of purpose." Nichols (1989:8) further defines the common components of institutional effectiveness among accrediting association requirements to include:

1. A clear statement of institutional purpose, mission, goals or objectives.
2. Identification of intended departmental/programmatic outcomes or objectives supporting accomplishment of the institutional statement of purpose.
3. Establishment of effective means for assessment of the extent to which departmental/programmatic outcomes or objectives have been accomplished.
4. Utilization of assessment results to improve or change institutional, programmatic, or departmental intentions or operations.

Ewell and Lisensky (1988: 19) also point out that "effectiveness is an elusive concept," with no single definition, and the particular meaning of which must be identified in an institutional context. In Levers for

Change,(1985b: 13) Ewell is concerned with institutional effectiveness from the state government's perspective. According to Ewell this involves getting answers to four questions and assessing in four directions:

1. What changes in student learning and development have occurred as a result of instruction? (including (a) cognitive development, (b) skills development, and (c) attitudinal development)
2. Who should colleges serve? (with access remaining an important dimension of performance)
3. How do students and society benefit from higher education? (considering the workplace, economy, marketplace and community)
4. How much will higher education improvement cost? (recognizing many potential claims on the same resources)

As Ewell's list suggests, student outcomes assessment is only one aspect of an accountability system. But as Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (1987: 4) state, "Because the primary goals of most colleges and universities concern student learning, . . . the assessment of student outcomes is fundamental to assessment for accountability."

In contrast to the state regulatory approach to institutional effectiveness addressed by Ewell (1985b) in Levers for Change, Ewell and Lisensky (1988) explore institutional effectiveness from a private college perspective in their study for the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education (CAPHE). The premise of their book is that the institutional accreditation process has the potential for addressing effectiveness in its totality. They define effectiveness as "the attainment of articulated, institution-specific goals, foremost among them being an

identifiable range of student outcomes" (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988: 14). This definition of institutional effectiveness takes into account each college's unique mission, goals, students, and tradition. Ewell and Lisensky (1988: 18) recognize there are many meanings of the term institutional effectiveness extant, but they claim "the notion must be defined by each institution and the arenas in which each chooses to pursue effectiveness becomes a critical decision."

Ewell and Lisensky (1988: 20), citing Krakower's 1985 work on the four domains of effectiveness, suggest institutions must decide which of the four views they consider most important and gather information consistent with that view. They caution that colleges can not do all of them at once, and achieving effectiveness in one approach may militate against its achievement in another. The four domains or perspectives are:

1. the goal achievement view--focusing on the outputs of the organization. This view requires identified goals and measures of progress toward them;
2. the management processes view of effectiveness;
3. the organizational climate view of effectiveness (supportive, absence of conflict etc.); and
4. the environmental adaptation view of effectiveness (i.e. an institution is effective if able to adapt).

Having selected a domain, the role of assessment then becomes one of gathering evidence of performance consistent with one's view of effectiveness. Ewell and Lisensky (1988: 24) maintain that "demonstrably effective

institutions exhibit three primary characteristics." They

1. clearly state what kinds of outcomes they are trying to produce;
2. explicitly assess the degree to which they are attaining those outcomes; and
3. make appropriate changes to improve the situation where data warrant.

Such assessment of outcomes and demonstrations of effectiveness are important aspects of the new accountability being demanded by most states of their public institutions. A critical additional element in accountability is cost effectiveness.

Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (1987: 4) cite Bowen in defining accountability in higher education as follows:

> It means tha college and universities are responsible for conducting their affairs so that the outcomes are worth the cost. It implies that institutional efforts would be directed toward appropriate goals and that the outcomes should be consistent with these goals and should be achieved at minimum cost.

Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (1987) point out further that the "legitimacy of an institution's educational activities is established through the accreditation process, in which external reviewers evaluate the quality of various programs and curricula." The authors suggest that institutional accountability in accreditation assumes that institutions have a responsibility to those who provide them with support to demonstrate that institutional goals are being achieved in a cost effective manner.

Pascarella (1989:19) asserts that

> One of the watchwords of higher education in the late 1970s and on into the 1980s has been accountability. Public institutions, in particular,

> are being called upon to document their effects in terms of student learning and development.

The emphasis, states Pascarella (1989), is often on general education and the development of baccalaureate-level skills and their assessment. The results of assessment are expected to be incorporated into the reviews of the pertinent areas.

Hutchings and Marchese in Change (1990: 38) address the term "accountability" with a new focus, stating that

> early on in the assessment movement, accountability became a dirty word; it was what "they" wanted, where "they" were bureaucrats and politicians with little sense of the subtleties of higher education. This is a perception that's starting to change, but a legacy remains. Even today, most of the talk about accountability focuses on that which runs from the institution to the state (reporting requirements).

But Hutchings and Marchese (1990), claim that some institutions have a different slant, wanting to look inside to deeper-running responsibilities like an institution's obligation to its students, delivering what was promised in recruitment, commensurate with students' investment of time, effort and money.

Hutchings' and Marchese's (1990) views seem to support Ewell's (1985a: 118) earlier conclusions about the lessons to be learned from accumulated experience in outcomes assessment. He states the lessons in familiar proverbs:

1. look before you leap
2. make sure the shoe fits
3. there is more than one way . . . and
4. the object is to learn.

This last point, suggests Ewell, is the final lesson for practitioners: that outcomes assessment has as its

ultimate objective "improvement in teaching and learning and in the environment within which they take place..." (1985a: 118).

In summary, there exists some confusion throughout the literature in the use of the terms assessment, outcomes, accountability and institutional effectiveness. It would appear that such confusion results in large part from frequent lack of clarification as to the purposes and levels of assessment being addressed or taking place in specific instances. Assessment may variably be undertaken at the individual student level or the program level. It may focus on the general education program or the outcomes of a particular major, or it may have an entire institution or systemwide focus. An assessment may utilize standardized testing, interviews or surveys, addressed to freshmen or alumni or perhaps employers. Outcomes of concern might be in the knowledge, skill or values arena. Accountability could be demanded by the state or measures of institutional effectiveness could be required by accrediting boards. The purpose of assessment could be to enhance teaching and learning or it could be to demonstrate effectiveness in meeting goals and objectives, whether educational or otherwise. Generally speaking, however, the literature suggests that outcomes assessment is viewed as focused in large part on the primary purpose of most institutions of higher education, that is the educational outcomes of its various programs, and usually including the

broad general education knowledge, skill and value outcomes common to most baccalaureate degrees. The literature does clearly indicate the necessity for clarifying terms, focus, purpose and levels of assessment within each individual context and project undertaken.

SACS Criteria and Core Curriculum Outcomes Assessment

Diane Halpern (1987) acknowledges that most outcomes assessment programs are undertaken for a variety of purposes, often blending goals of program improvement, gatekeeping, cost effectiveness and accountability. Among the primary reasons for outcomes assessment cited in the literature, however, is to establish accountability for external agencies (Jacobi, Astin and Ayala, 1987). Particularly for private colleges like Brenau, the most significant external agency imposing accountability, effectiveness and assessment requirements on the college is the regional accrediting association.

Folger and Harris in Assessment in Accreditation (1989) point out that each of the regional accrediting associations in the United States has set specific expectations and requirements for assessment results in response to the public, political and government pressures of the past decade for improvement of quality in higher education. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) created and implemented its new institutional effectiveness criteria in response to these

pressures and in support of the concept of ongoing assessment of outcomes "as an essential part of educational improvement "(Folger and Harris, 1989: 10). The challenge faced by institutions beginning outcomes assessment programs, according to Folger and Harris, "is to develop one that serves its own needs as well as meeting the requirements of the accrediting association or of the state or other governing body" (1989: 10). An additional challenge the authors cite is the essential contradiction in ongoing assessment programs between the formative or improvement purposes of assessment and the summative or judgmental uses of assessment.

The specific SACS criteria on effectiveness are found in the Criteria for Accreditation, Commission on Colleges (SACS, 1989-1990) under Section III, entitled "Institutional Effectiveness." The opening statement of Section III (SACS, 1989-1990: 13) immediately cites "quality of education" as being "the primary consideration in the decision to confer or reaffirm accreditation." Although other criteria such as resources, faculty qualifications, physical plant and fiscal resources are still taken into account, the new criteria recognize evaluation of results of education and plans for improvement of institutional programs as important in "a comprehensive approach to accreditation" (SACS, 1989-1990: 13). According to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, "Institutions have an obligation to all

constituents to evaluate effectiveness and to use the results in a broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation process" (1989-1990: 13).

Section 3.1 of the Criteria, entitled "Planning and Evaluation," contains a "must" statement requiring an institution to "define its expected educational results and describe how the achievement of these results will be ascertained" (SACS, 1989-1990: 14). Although SACS does not prescribe a specific planning and evaluation format, the following elements are described as included in an effective process:

1. broad-based involvement of faculty and administration;
2. establishment of a clearly defined purpose appropriate to collegiate education;
3. formulation of educational goals consistent with the institution's purpose;
4. development of procedures for evaluating the extent to which these educational goals are being achieved; and
5. the use of the results of these evaluations to improve institutional effectiveness. (SACS, 1989-1990: 14).

SACS further suggests institutions "should ascertain periodically the change in academic achievement of their students" (SACS, 1989-1990: 14), using any of a variety of means to evaluate instructional programs. According to the Southern Association, such means might include peer evaluation of educational programs, structured interviews with students and graduates, pre- and post- testing of students, surveys of recent graduates or employers, scores on standardized or local exams, etc. The SACS guidelines

actually encourage the use of a variety of procedures in assessment.

Focusing on the undergraduate education program, Section 4.1 of the SACS Criteria contains the subsections 4.1.2, "Undergraduate Completion Requirements," 4.1.3, "Undergraduate Curriculum," and 4.1.4, "Undergraduate Instruction." Each of these subsections makes reference to core curricular elements of an undergraduate education program which institutions are expected to assess as part of their accreditation process.

In section 4.1.2, Undergraduate Completion Requirements, SACS (1989-1990: 17) mandates that

> Completion requirements for an associate or baccalaureate degree must include competence in reading, writing, oral communications and fundamental mathematical skills.

Section 4.1.3, Undergraduate Curriculum, includes the following "must" statements:

> There must be a clearly defined process by which the curriculum is established, reviewed and evaluated.
>
> Undergraduate degree programs must contain a basic core of general education courses (for degree completion in associate programs, a minimum of 15 semester hours; in baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours). The core must include at least one course from each of the following areas: the humanities/fine arts, the social/behavioral sciences, and the natural sciences/mathematics. Within this core, or in addition to it, the institution must provide components designed to ensure competence in reading, writing, oral communication and fundamental mathematical skills. Because the computer is an important means of both communication and computation, institutions should provide means by which students may acquire basic competencies in the use of computers (SACS, 1989-1990: 17-18).

Finally, section 4.1.4, "Undergraduate Instruction," contains a reiteration of statements contained under "Institutional Effectiveness," which impact upon the core curriculum, specifically:

> Instruction must be evaluated regularly and evidence collected to demonstrate that efforts are being made to improve instruction.

And:

> The effectiveness of instruction must be periodically studied. The institution should evaluate the effectiveness of its instructional program by a variety of techniques which may include the use of standardized tests and comprehensive exams, the assessment of the performance of graduates in advanced programs or employment, and the sampling of the opinions of former students (SACS, 1989-1990: 18-19).

In summary, the SACS criteria are written with the expectation that a core curriculum will be designed to ensure competence in reading, writing, oral communication, fundamental mathematics skills and basic computer skills, and will contain at least one content course each in humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and the natural sciences/mathematics. A well defined process for establishing, reviewing and evaluating the curriculum, including the core, is expected, and instruction is to be evaluated regularly to ascertain it effectiveness. Efforts to improve instruction must be demonstrated. A variety of techniques for such study and evaluation is anticipated.

Addressing a Graduate Seminar on Higher Education Policy sponsored by the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Rogers (1989), Executive Director of the

Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association spoke on the subject of "Regional Accreditation: Strategies for the 1990s." He asserted that the major purposes of accreditation were to (1) encourage (not mandate) institutional improvement and (2) ensure (to students, parents, and other constituents) minimal levels of educational quality. He suggested that SACS' requirement of outcomes assessment evolved from recommendations of the Governors' Report in 1986, and that SACS, of all the regional accreditors, has responded the most aggressively. Rogers suggested a variety of means of assessment are acceptable to meet SACS criteria, including general education exams, portfolios, and national exams in major fields.

Folger and Harris (1989) in Assessment in Accreditation frequently elaborate on the role of core curriculum assessment in the accreditation process under the SACS criteria. They state that the "self-study's section on assessment should report summaries of assessed student performance in general education. . . ." (Folger and Harris, 1989: 14). Preliminary to such assessment, the authors point out, it is necessary to have a clear and specific statement of purpose expressed in terms of goals and objectives which can be assessed.

The "collegiate purpose" clause under Section II of the Criteria (SACS, 1989-1990) is addressed by Folger and Harris (1989) as being one aspect of the Southern

Association's effort to comply with the 1987 Department of Education regulations requiring accrediting associations to see that institutions assess degree candidate education. The current SACS Criteria (SACS, 1989-1990: 13) state that "Each institution must have a purpose appropriate to collegiate education as well as to its own specific role."

Folger and Harris (1989: 19) recognize the "growing concern about the amount of remedial or developmental work that institutions are doing" and the lack of basic knowledge and skills of entering students that has motivated assessments of general education abilities to determine collegiate level performance. They suggest one way an institution might determine if its goals are appropriate to collegiate education would be

> to compare its students' academic achievement both at entrance and later in their college career with that of students from other colleges, nationally or within a relevant sector of higher education. It should be noted that an institution's goals may be appropriate, but the level of student achievement may not be (Folger and Harris, 1989: 19).

The authors acknowledge that the concept of "appropriate collegiate education" is not defined in the Criteria (SACS, 1989-1990) and that there is little consensus in the diversity of institutions today compared to the homogeneous nature of higher education in the 1930s; however they suggest the "appropriateness of general education goals might be evaluated by reviewing what various writers believe high school graduates should know" (Folger and Harris, 1989:27) such as suggested by the

College Board's "Green Book" - - Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able To Do, published in 1983. Likewise the 1984 publication of the American Association of Colleges, Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community (Project, 1985), contains recommendations for elements essential to an undergraduate curriculum. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission's 1977 description in The Competent College Student, as well as the distinctions made by the Minnesota Higher Education Commission in their 1986 publication, Defining College-Level Skills, are additional sources to describe "a coherent undergraduate education" (Folger and Harris, 1989: 28).

Folger and Harris (1989: 29) state that a "critical issue in determining what is appropriate to collegiate education is a definition of collegiate general education." There is little consensus on what constitutes an educated person and no national consensus on general education either, they contend. Where they do find some consensus is "on the general education basics of reading, writing, speaking, and calculating" (Folger and Harris, 1989: 29). These competencies are reflected in the SACS criteria requirements. Folger and Harris (1989: 29) found further that "Among the current assessment efforts across the country, the basic skill 'writing' is the one most frequently chosen for formal, across-the-institution assessment." The authors also reported that

> The two main points at which colleges and universities are assessing student achievement in addition to within-course tests are at the end of the sophomore year - on general education knowledge and skill- and during the senior year - on competence in the major field of study" (Folger and Harris, 1989: 55).

In summary, the two major purposes of assessment - that of compliance with external requirements and that of internal improvement - meet in the requirements of the accrediting association. The Southern Association Criteria (SACS, 1989-1990) contain a variety of "must" statements which require assessment of the core curriculum, and the institutional effectiveness criteria in general mandate that the results of such assessments be used to improve programming and the overall teaching/learning experience of undergraduates. The same information gathered serves the external, summative, judgmental purposes as well as the formative, internal, improvement purposes. In general education, it is difficult for faculties to reach consensus on goals and objectives or "on what a baccalaureate degree means in terms of student achievement" and even harder to "get agreement on means of assessing. . . ." (Folger and Harris, 1989: 82). Folger and Harris (1989: 84) recommend that "institutions should design an assessment system that meets their own needs for information and better decision making, because that system will also be responsive to the accreditation requirements." They also recommend keeping it simple, setting priorities, assessing a few outcomes, not attempting more than the institution can support, and

getting multiple perspectives, quantitative and qualitative (Folger and Harris, 1989).

Current Practice in Core Curriculum Outcomes Assessment

The SACS Criteria (1989-1990) offer little guidance with regard to the specific organization of an outcomes assessment program, or with respect to the specific measurement methodologies or instruments. While the ultimate goal of institutional effectiveness is clear, arriving at the goal by acceptable means is a more elusive concept. The literature on outcomes assessment offers a number of quite diverse examples of how various institutions have approached outcomes assessment, and specifically assessment in and of the core curriculum.

Describing outcomes assessment in the public sector, state by state, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) published a working paper in 1990 entitled State Initiatives in Assessment and Outcomes Measurement: Tools for Teaching and Learning in the 1990s (Paulson, 1990). Individual state profiles are provided, outlining the origins and purposes of assessment in each state, as well as addressing data collection, state reporting requirements and findings.

Ewell, Finny and Lenth (1990) make the following general observations about the ECS survey results. Only eight states reported no statewide assessment policy and nothing planned for the immediate future. Most states that have recently begun assessment are following board policies

that allow institutions flexibility to establish their own approaches. Eighteen states were found to be following the pattern of Virginia and Colorado, namely to require the development of an assessment plan consistent with institutional mission and to report on results periodically.

Ewell, Finney and Lenth (1990) cite statewide mandatory assessment instruments in only four states: Florida, Georgia, New Jersey and Tennessee, and only in one state (Florida) is the test a true "gateway" examination on the K-12 model. Basic skills testing was found to be frequent but only four states reported complete commonality statewide.

Upon examination of individual state initiatives, it was noted that several states made specific references to general education assessment. For most the requirement was stated in terms of the development of some (no specified details) evaluation of student learning within the general education core by a specified date, with prior Board of Higher Education approval. Reference was also made to the collection of data for assessing basic skills at entry as well as achievement in the general education core. Specific states citing general education assessment requirements were Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and New Jersey.

Illinois institutions, it was reported by ECS (Paulson, 1990), have developed a variety of assessment activities in general education including rising-junior writing proficiency examinations, team graded common course final examinations and general education field examinations, proficiency tests in quantitative reasoning, and senior-year capstone seminars as well as commercially available tests of general education learning. Kentucky's accountability legislation calls for multiple strategies including student follow-up surveys, rising junior assessments, and value-added from general education. Louisiana adopted statewide general education requirements in 1986, including proficiency testing in mathematics and English, though no common statewide test is required. In Minnesota a number of pilot assessment projects at various institutions have been funded by the Higher Education Coordinating Board including assessment of critical thinking outcomes, the use of standardized instruments and student focus groups, department based assessment of student writing using portfolios, and assessment of student learning in general education. New Jersey operates a College Outcomes Evaluation Program (COEP) employing multiple indicators to assess general education including the General Intellectual Skills test.

Florida reported statewide use of the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) as a rising junior measure of college level reading, computation and writing skills

(Paulson, 1990). Georgia reported systemwide testing of entering students on basic skills and use of the statewide Regents Test in the sophomore year to measure writing ability and reading comprehension (Paulson, 1990). Passage of the Georgia Regents Test is a requirement for graduation from both two and four year institutions. Test scores, however, are not used for curriculum evaluation; such assessment is not required by the state to date.

Ewell (1987: 9) in "Establishing a Campus-Based Assessment Program" states that the "major hallmark of assessment efforts continues to be their diversity." He cites five quite different methodological traditions currently in use in the assessment movement, each of which could be applied to core curricular assessment:

1. Standardized tests, originally designed for student selection and placement;
2. Locally developed comprehensive exams, devised by faculty to demonstrate mastery of certain curricula;
3. Face to face interviews and task performance techniques, such as used in business;
4. Survey questionnaires of students, former students, etc.;
5. Traditional institutional research studies of student persistence, program completion, and enrollment behavior (Ewell, 1987: 16).

Vanderment (1987) cites California State University's objections to evaluation of the outcomes of the undergraduate experience based primarily on student performance on nationally normed, standardized tests. It was felt that such evaluation would force the curricula into narrow bands of demonstrable outcomes and undermine commitment to the development of critical thinking skills

and ethical and creative sensibilities "that distinguish the truly educated from the adequately trained. . ." (Vanderment, 1987: 26). Vanderment's (1987) article describes four different models of student outcomes assessment: (1) Florida's "gateway" approach using the CLAST rising junior exam; (2) Trenton (New Jersey) State College's concentration on the assessment of general education curriculum; (3) Northeast Missouri State's assessment of learner gains in academic majors; and (4) the University of Tennessee's model of performance funding based on documentation of excellence and gains in predetermined areas. These models again suggest the multifaceted nature of assessing student outcomes.

Banta and Moffett (1987) describe the use of the ACT COMP at the University of Tennessee Knoxville to assess student development in general education objectives. Since 1983 UTK has been administering the ACT COMP to freshmen and seniors and in 1987 the university compiled its first longitudinal data study on one cohort based on the test results. The early results suggested a need to improve the general education curriculum by strengthening problem solving across the curriculum. UKT evaluates programs, not individual students, and focuses on mean scores and dispersion to discover strengths and weaknesses. According to Banta and Moffett (1987), they also use various methods like tests and surveys, not relying on a single instrument. Students are required to participate in assessment

activities but are not penalized by results. Faculty and administration in turn have incentives to gather accurate data and use the information to strengthen educational efforts.

Krueger and Heisserer (1987) cite Northeast Missouri State University's (NMSU) value-added approach to assessment with the primary target of assessment being student learning gains. NMSU administered the ACT and the ACT COMP tests of general knowledge to demonstrate student growth in general knowledge between the beginning of the freshman year and the end of the sophomore year.

Curry and Hager (1987) reiterate the importance of using assessment to evaluate programs as opposed to individual students or faculty. At Trenton State (New Jersey) it was discovered that students were not demonstrating the skills that the faculty claimed to be stressing, nor showing the weaknesses the faculty expected. A six-step feedback loop describes the process used at Trenton State to assess the general education program:

1. Develop or revise goals;
2. Attach the goals to each general education course;
3. Select or create a means of assessment, administer it and analyze the results;
4. Evaluate the instrument;
5. Evaluate and revise the curriculum;
6. Revise the goals and continue the process.

Basically three kinds of assessment are recommended by the New Jersey Board of Higher Education to measure basic skills and general education in state institutions: final exams in remedial courses should be similar to the original

basic skills test given at entrance; there should be a statewide focus on thinking skills; and each college should assess the knowledge areas of its general education program (Curry and Hager, 1987: 57). At Trenton State specifically, eight general education goals were determined and a survey taken in all departments asking to what extent their courses met each goal, and how they were evaluating or could evaluate student achievement of said goals. The responses, according to Curry and Hager (1987), indicated several courses did not stress the goals which seemed their natural responsibility, and that often two faculty members teaching in the same course has different goals. These results led to recommendations regarding agreed upon goals per course, although with freedom to select appropriate materials and methods.

After careful study of available commercial tests and comparison of the college's goals with those tests (including the Miller Analogies, the NTE, CLEP, the Undergraduate Assessment Program) Trenton further decided to administer the ETS Test of General Education and the ACT COMP to assess the general education core. It was agreed that comparisons would be made between native and transfer seniors, native seniors with national norms, native seniors with freshmen, and freshmen with their own senior grades three years later (Curry and Hager, 1987).

The results of the testing at Trenton State led to the expression of several concerns regarding the standardized

testing. It was discovered that if GPA was not effected by the testing, students didn't try. The four hours of testing at the end of a long day was too much and it was difficult to get people to give up a four hour block of time without any personal gain; many of the best seniors did not present themselves for the test thus biasing the sample. It was impossible to find a test that measured all skills and understanding Trenton had determined as important. Finally, Trenton officials were unprepared for the small difference in raw scores between the freshman and senior year results (only eight points on the total ACT COMP score). It was finally recommended that "enthusiasm be tempered by intelligence and skepticism, that results be interpreted with caution, and that several forms of assessment be used" (Curry and Hager, 1987: 60).

Astin (1987) recommends viewing development in the general education core from a value-added perspective, which necessitates some notion of what level students enter with on various skills or knowledge. Astin suggests that pre- and post-tests and peer assessments provide feedback to students guiding the learning process and facilitating development. Such evaluations also provide faculty with feedback to aid the teaching/learning process. Admission testing or placement testing can often serve as the pre-test of a skill or knowledge with followup post-testing later on for gaining longitudinal measures. In fact, Astin (1987) points out, students matriculating for the first

time are generally in an extremely cooperative frame of mind and are ideal subjects for pre-tests or placement tests whereas it is often an intrusion on faculty and student time to conduct pre-tests once they are in classes. Post-tests, on the other hand, might have to be mandated as it is hard to congregate the same group again. Astin further advises that new outcomes assessment be initiated modestly and with minimum disruption of institutional activities.

One of the newest ideas in general education assessment in recent years is the use of portfolios to gain information about and to evaluate general education programming. Although portfolios have a long history of use in such fields as writing and the fine arts, and more recently in the evaluation of adult credentials for experiential college credit, serious dissatisfaction with overdependency on standardized testing has created interest in the use of portfolios to evaluate general education. In 1989-1990 a study group was convened under the leadership of Forrest at Emporia State University and with funding from the Exxon Education Foundation, to review the extensive experience of the chosen participants and to attempt to better understand the potential advantages, issues and options of portfolio-assisted assessment. In the 1990 report of the study group authored by Forrest and entitled Time Will Tell: Portfolio Assisted Assessment of General Education, the group concluded that

> Done well, portfolio-assisted assessment holds great potential for improving general education. Portfolios can help measure student progress toward a variety of general education goals that people care about but have difficulty assessing. Portfolios can provide important clues about how students learn best, and they can directly aid in that learning. In the long term, because they build on existing assessment activities and have multiple payoffs, portfolios may represent the most cost effective evaluation tool available (Forrest, 1990: 19).

Forrest (1990) and the study group identified five sets of decisions which must precede implementation of a general education portfolio assessment project:

1. Developing a definition of general education.
2. Deciding what to include in the portfolios and when.
3. Determining how and by whom the portfolios are to be analyzed.
4. Building a cost-effective process.
5. Getting started.

The main advantages cited for the use of portfolios were that they draw upon and support current teaching activities, they track students over time, and that they use several assessment techniques simultaneously. The portfolio thus has the potential to be a part of instruction and have value as a learning experience, to assist faculty in improving teaching efforts, and to measure the effectiveness of the institution as a facilitator of various kinds of student learning (Forrest, 1990: 2). In addition, the portfolios are seen as useful in student advising and later on in the student's job search.

Forrest (1990) identifies three different definitions of general education. The first views general education as coursework only. The second definition includes selected

out-of-class activities (such as residential life) along with coursework to be evaluated in determining the achievement of general education goals. Finally, all elements of the collegiate experience could be included in a definition of general education programming, including elective coursework and major field contributions to the attainment of general education goals.

The study group (Forrest, 1990) recommends starting small, then allowing the portfolio project to grow. Several different priority goals are identified and examples of institutions trying out each are given. Lehman College of CUNY, for example, is using "unplanned portfolios" to explore ways to assess general education and discover what de facto outcomes as well as planned outcomes may be resulting from the general education program. The College of Business at Butler University, on the other hand, has used portfolios to assess problem-solving, communication, and metacognitive processing skills specifically. The College determined that portfolios could most appropriately assess higher -order and complex outcomes not easily evaluated by other means. The University of Alaska Southeast, however, started with the outcomes most common across institutions (writing and critical thinking) to allow them to seek advice and assistance from more experienced colleagues. SUNY-Fredonia, in contrast, is an example of an institution using portfolios to collect feedback on its entire detailed

statement of goals and guidelines for general education, from a student's entrance through the senior year.

Other examples of portfolio assisted assessment of general education outcomes collected by the study group (Forrest, 1990) include the project ongoing at Emporia State University where portfolios are maintained by a sample of freshmen and seniors who are paid to participate. A faculty committee reviews the portfolios for evidence of student achievement of five broad goals of general education. On the other end of the spectrum, Evergreen State College maintains a portfolio on each student, including program descriptions and evaluations at the end of each semester by faculty and the student. These materials become a student's narrative transcript as well as a means to evaluate student achievement of five overall objectives of the curriculum. At Plymouth State College portfolios are used to collect and assess student writing across the curriculum for a sample of students. Samples of writing from each of nine courses taken as part of general education are included. The College of William and Mary likewise uses portfolios to assess the writing dimension of general education for purposes of program evaluation (Forrest, 1990).

The AAHE Directory of assessment programs (Paskow, 1990), updated in 1990, offers additional description of a wide range of approaches to assessment at institutions of various size, type and purpose. Included among those with

specific reference to core curricular assessment and described in greater detail below are the classical Alverno and Northeast Missouri State models, Clayton State College's variation on the Alverno theme, the Appalachian College Assessment Consortium's cost effective plan, and the King's College (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania) outcomes-oriented core curriculum approach.

Alverno College is a four-year, liberal arts college for women located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Assessment at Alverno is focused on individual student learning as distinguished from both program evaluation and evaluation of institutional effectiveness, with feedback to the learner receiving primary emphasis. The Assessment Center method is used to measure student growth and development in eight general outcomes, with assessment providing feedback shared across the curriculum by faculty in all courses and departments. The eight outcomes are: communication, analysis, problem solving, valuing, social interaction, effective citizenship, responsibility toward the global environment, and aesthetic responsiveness. Alverno employs outside assessors as well as student self assessment of gains, faculty developed instruments as well as external measures, open-ended, confidential interviews of students and alumnae, and portfolios in writing and speaking (including videotaping). The eight competencies are nurtured and assessed throughout a student's career and are required elements for graduation (Paskow, 1990).

Clayton State College in Morrow, Georgia provides an interesting model for core assessment which borrows heavily from the Alverno Assessment Center approach, yet is unique. Clayton states its primary purpose for assessment is the improvement of student learning, and has in place an outcome-focused, assessment-based general education program. Eight outcomes have been identified and described by the faculty including the skills of communication and critical thinking and six perspectives or knowledge-based frames of reference (aesthetic, contemporary, historical, mathematical, scientific, and value). Several samples of student work are elicited relative to each outcome, performance-referenced criteria are used to judge the samples, and feedback is provided to students on the level of his or her ability. Demonstrations of specified levels of ability are required to progress through the program. Students are assessed at entry and placed accordingly. Learning labs have been established in communications and labs focusing on other outcomes are projected for creation as needed. A review and revision process is built in and ongoing (Paskow, 1990).

Northeast Missouri State University's assessment program, as described in the AAHE Directory (Paskow, 1990), has a strong value-added approach. The purpose of assessment at Northeast is to discover the results of teaching/learning other than through course grades, to learn what value has been added as a benefit of a student's

Northeast experience, and to know that graduates of the university are nationally competitive. A measurement of value-added in general knowledge from the beginning of the freshman year to the end of the sophomore year constitutes one component of Northeast's three part assessment program. Student achievement in the major and students' self-perceptions of growth make up the other major foci of assessment. Repeated administrations of the ACT and the ACT-COMP had been utilized to evaluate general education since the mid 1970s, although in 1989 the Enhanced ACT was adopted for admission and ability baseline data purposes only, and no longer used as a sophomore test of value-added. Currently both the ACT-COMP and the CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) are administered during the first week of freshman matriculation, with half the class taking each test. The COMP and the CAAP are administered to students in matched sequence at the end of the sophomore year as well. In addition, in 1989, portfolio assessment was added at Northeast to better assess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of liberal learning (Paskow, 1990).

King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania is a private baccalaureate college with an outcomes-oriented core curriculum and eight competence growth plans (Paskow, 1990). Using multiple assessment measures, both students and faculty receive feedback on the learning and teaching of the competencies. All faculty and departments share

common responsibility for transferable skills of liberal learning such as writing, critical thinking, and valuing across the curriculum, including in the major. The assessment measures are embedded in coursework, although until recently the ACT-COMP was administered to freshmen and seniors. It was eliminated as it was judged by a faculty committee to be incongruent with the college's course-embedded approach to assessment. Current goals include the development of new stategies for student self-assessment, a more sophisticated approach to portfolios, and the design of a system to collect documentation of student learning useful for program evaluation.

A final example of core curriculum assessment views as described in the AAHE Directory (Paskow, 1990) is that of the Appalachian College Assessment Consortium. Members of the consortium are private, liberal arts, mostly church-related colleges in Appalachia, hoping to develop a cost-effective, consortium approach to the assessment of institutional effectiveness, particularly in the area of general education. The major external impetus to the project was the criteria of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools relating to institutional effectiveness. Among the strategies used by the group is the interviewing of a sample of seniors each spring, with three students from distinct majors meeting with a single faculty member who asks questions designed to draw on all areas of their general education. Interviews are taped,

transcribed, and analyzed for indications of success in reaching certain general education goals. A second assessment technique involves a freshman writing/placmement exercise focused on similar topics at each college. Essays are returned to students when the become seniors and they are asked to revise it based upon their four years at the college, demonstrating not only writing skill growth but also change in content and self-awareness. The essay becomes the basis for an interview with a faculty member in the senior year. Finally, the Appalacian College Assessment Consortium participated in the initial field-testing and pilot-testing of the ETS Acadmeic Profile and plans to administer it to entering freshmen and seniors (Paskow, 1990).

The Assistant Director of Academic Programs for the State Council of Higher Education for the State of Virginia offered additional views on assessment approaches when she addressed the 12th Annual Graduate Student Seminar on Higher Education Policy sponsored by ASHE in November 1989. Her topic was "Implementing a State-Based Approach to Assessment: The Virginia Experience." She suggested that the primary purpose of assessment in Virginia was to improve teaching and learning especially in undergraduate education. Miller (1989) said that general education assessment in Virginia initially relied upon the nationally normed ACT-COMP and ETS Academic Profile for comparative data but that the results were found to be difficult to

feed back into curriculum reform. Therefore a shift was in process toward a focus on student outcomes and an examination of such approaches as portfolios. She also suggested student work produced for other purposes like a seminar project be submitted to assessment procedures with a well developed rating sheet identifying what exact competencies are being sought. Faculty and students alike would be apprised of these specific goals. In addition, Miller advised the development of tracking systems for developmental education to discover the effectiveness or lack thereof in those programs, particularly with respect to graduation rates of students enrolled. Finally, she reiterated the maxim so often stated in the assessment literature in general that effective assessment with a goal of improved teaching and learning requires commitment from all segments of the college or university community starting with the President and including the faculty, student affairs personnel, etc.

In Assessing Institutional Effectivenss: Redirecting the Self-Study Process, Ewell and Lisensky (1988) describe the core curricular assessment approaches taken by a group of ten private, liberal arts colleges in the Southern and North Central accrediting regions in response to new institutional effectiveness guidelines. A program to assist these colleges was initiated in 1987 by the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education (CAPHE). Assistance was provided to define learning

outcomes and determine strategies for measuring them. As stated by the authors (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988: 9), the effort was aimed at finding "ways to assess those more subtle, but also more valued outcomes of education. Unless we can do so, assessment runs the danger of trivializing, not enhancing, higher education."

Difficulties encountered in the CAPHE program included lack of resources, faculty aversion to the notion (especially in the humanities), and gaps in communication among departments. Nevertheless particpants identified the general knowledge and attitudes/values dimensions as the most important to assess especially as these related to what they termed liberal education (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988: 26). In small liberal arts colleges, the authors point out, "liberal education tends to be an arena in which many promises are made but little evidence is gathered" (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988: 26). In most of the colleges, Ewell and Lisensky (1988) found such claims as the achievement of knowledge integration, culture appreciation, a sense of history, an understanding of the responsibility of individuals and the like were to be achieved by contact with a set of course distribution requirements, but none had developed a systematic means of assessing their success. Pace's 1985 statement as quoted by Ewell and Lisensky (1988: 26) seems appropriate: "The statement of the ends of liberal education are statements of faith and hope and should be read with charity."

Specific approaches taken by CAPHE study particpants included documented efforts to review course syllabi to uncover the degree to which the expressed values of the institution were actually present in instruction (College of Notre Dame) and Prescott College's effort to study and document the differences between the stated mission of the college and the behavioral mission revealed by close observation (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988). Most of the colleges found a need to express their goals in more precise behavioral terms and to reduce the list of expressed goals to manageable length or a few central themes. They also recognized the importance of finding and emphasizing their areas of true distinctiveness. Prescott College chose to do narrative evaluations to determine competency, a very non-traditional approach, requiring voluminous records of student products, and two readers with a rating guide based on identified goals of the Prescott curriculum. In general, the CAPHE particpants were encouraged to discover and work with the information they had at hand or readily available.

Summary of Current Practice

To summarize the literature on current practice in core curriculum outcomes assessment it would appear reasonable to quote Ewell again that the "major hallmark of assessment efforts continues to be their diversity" (Ewell, 1987: 9). Most states and institutions reviewed emphasized the importance of developing an assessment plan consistent

with individual institutional mission as opposed to copying another existing plan. Basic skills testing, rising junior writing proficiency exams, measures of critical thinking, standardized tests of general education, pre- and post-testing of value-added, portfolios for assessing parts or all of the general education program, interviews and focus groups, student self-assessments, and surveys or questionnaires were all frequently cited and used in various combinations. Some disgruntlement was expressed with the difficulty of matching curriculum and test goals and feeding results of standardized tests back into curriculum reform. A solution and caution generally offered was the use of multiple indicators in assessment. In particular, the use of portfolios to assess general education programming was recommended as an alternative to perceived over-dependency on, as well as some of the shortcomings of standardized testing. The literature suggested a wide variety of approaches to the use of portfolios in general education existed.

Some institutions like Clayton State and Alverno had highly developed complex, and integrated programs for assessing indentified outcomes of general education across the curriculum. Other institutions like Northeast Missouri State focused more on value-added by the programming as measured by repeated administrations of standardized tests. Still another level of assessment was evidenced by plans like that of the Appalachian College Assessment Consortium

with just a few selected efforts focused on meeting the SACS criteria for institutional effectiveness. The CAPHE study participants, all small, private liberal arts colleges, likewise demonstrated smaller scale assessment efforts seeking to emphasize their areas of distinctiveness.

In general the literature on successful current practice supported the philosophy of starting out modestly with assessment efforts and minimizing the disruption of regular institutional activities. Futhermore, making the maximum use of existing data sources and information collecting processes was recommended. Adapting assessment efforts to individual institutional mission, purpose and resources was stressed, particularly for the small private colleges. Finally the literature repeatedly suggested that assessment programs are continually reviewed and revised as collected evidence suggests the need.

Chapter 3

METHODOLODY AND PROCEDURES

Overview

In order to develop a core curriculum outcomes assessment plan for Brenau Women's College it was necessary to discover which elements and what overall structure would be best adapted to core curricular assessment at Brenau College. First, the broad and extensive literature on outcomes assessment was reviewed. Specifically four areas of concern were researched: (1) the historical background of the assessment movement, particularly in the 1980s; (2) definitions,purposes and levels in assessment as described in the literature; (3) SACS criteria and core curriculum assessment; and (4) current practice in core curricular assessment nationwide. In addition, a sampling of institutions was contacted directly by telephone, Brenau College administrators were interviewed, an analysis of current core assessment efforts at Brenau was undertaken via a review of Assessment Center files, and reports were obtained from Department Chairs with core curricular responsibilites. Elements which appeared to be appropriate to Brenau's core assessment plan as well as to a plan for evaluating the plan devised were compiled from the above investigations and submitted to formative evaluation via the Brenau Assessment Committee and ultimately a SACS

reaffirmation visiting committee. The final plan is reproduced in Appendix K.

Literature Review

Research subquestions one through four guiding the development of Brenau's core assessment plan required a thorough investigation of the broad literature on assessment. First, to discover and better understand the origins and philosophical basis of the outcomes assessment movement in American higher education in the 1980s, and thereby ascertain the motivation behind the current emphasis on assessment and its potential applicability to Brenau, studies on the evolution of outcomes assessment as an emphasis in the 1980s were researched and original sources referred to were studied. Publications of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools on the development of institutional effectiveness criteria, outcomes assessment experts like Ewell of NCHEMS and Banta at the University of Tennessee, as well as American Association on Higher Education publications and authors among others were researched.

Second, definitions of "assessment", "accountability", institutional effectiveness", "outcomes", and "student outcomes" were determined based on current usage in the literature. In particular, the terms "student outcomes assessment" and "program evaluation or assessment" were investigated and clarified as used in the literature on assessment. Further, the application of these terms to

core curricular reviews was explored. The works of Alexander and Stark, Astin, Banta, Boyer, Davis, Ewell, Ewell and Lisensky, D. Halpern, Hutchings, Jacobi et. al., Krotseng, Marchese, Pascarella and Terenzini were consulted.

In response to research subquestion three, the criteria on institutional effectiveness, published by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) which accredits Brenau College, were investigated. In order to determine how SACS criteria relate to outcomes assessment in the core curriculum, the written SACS Criteria for Accreditation (1989-1990) were studied, particularly the sections on Institutional Effectiveness (Section III) and on the Undergraduate Educational Program (Section IV, 4.1). In addition, the Associate Executive Director of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, was interviewed (see questions, Appendix C) to further investigate the expectations of this accrediting board with respect to core curriculum assessment. Inquiry was made as to the anticipated future direction of the current emphasis on institutional effectiveness.

Research subquestion number four led to an investigation of current publications on assessment to learn what other colleges in the United States were doing to assess core curricular outcomes and general education programs. An ECS (Paulson, 1990) publication and an AAHE

(Paskow, 1990) publication as well as the works of Astin (1987), Banta and Moffett (1987), Curry and Hager (1987), Ewell and Lisensky (1988), Forrest (1990), and Vanderment (1987) were consulted. Literature from and about ACT and ETS test packages was among that dealing with current practice that was reviewed for information and further leads. In particular, the experiences of smaller colleges (and other private colleges like Brenau, without state resources) like the Appalachian consortium and King's College (Paskow, 1990) were sought.

Telephone Interviews With Five Colleges

From the models discovered in the literature review and interviews, a sample of five institutions with documented experience in core curriculum assessment were selected for direct consultation in a continuing effort to respond to research subquestion four and discover more about current core assessment at other colleges. Telephone interviews were conducted with the director of institutional research or assessment, and/or the person concerned with general education at each sample institution in an attempt to document specifics of their core curriculum assessment practices and/or plans. Each of the institutions selected was in the Southern Association accrediting region and faced with the same institutional effectiveness criteria as Brenau. Specific questions used to guide each interview are reproduced in Appendix F.

Brenau Assessment Directions

To document the guidelines in effect currently at Brenau College for core curricular assessment, as suggested by research subquestion five, interviews were conducted with the Brenau College President, and with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Questions which guided the interviews are reproduced in Appendices D and E.

To determine what ongoing assessment efforts existed already at Brenau (subquestion six), the minutes of the Assessment Committee (formerly the Core Curriculum Review Committee) were reviewed and a summary of ongoing, projected and discussed core assessment efforts compiled. In addition, department chairs with supervisory responsibilities over any aspect of the Brenau core curriculum were contacted. A summary report was requested from each, outlining core courses being taught in their respective departments, the core outcomes addressed in each course, and the means of evaluation being used or anticipated to assess outcome attainment.

Development of a Brenau Core Assessment Plan

Based largely upon the information gathered from institutional sources as to Brenau's current status, and based also on the literature reviews and interviews regarding current practice at other institutions, a document outlining some basic assumptions relevant to the development of a core assessment plan at Brenau was drafted, responding to research subquestion seven. A

lengthy list of questions which would need to be addressed to guide Brenau College in core curricular assessment was included in the draft document which was circulated among the members of the faculty Assessment Committee in anticipation of a meeting to discuss a core curricular assessment plan for Brenau Women's College. The assumptions and questions document as circulated is reproduced in Appendix I.

Next, the various assessment approaches, which it had been determined from the literature reviews and interviews conducted would be appropriate to Brenau's plan, were organized in conjunction with administrative guidelines and already existing core assessment efforts at Brenau into an initial draft plan for core curricular assessment (research subquestion number eight). Basic assumptions were stated, derived from literature review and interviews, and existing or proposed assessment approaches and/or concerns derived from all the previously described investigations were grouped into related categories to facilitate organization and Assessment Committee review. The draft plan is reproduced in Appendix J. The faculty Assessment Committee was asked to react to the plan and make recommendations for a final version to include a specific plan for the evaluation of the plan itself once implemented. A committee determination of the most appropriate choices for Brenau was requested, taking into consideration college mission, a concern for quality, population, fiscal and human

resources, sound educational theory and practice, and external requirements. Both student outcomes assessment and overall core curricular program assessment were to be included in the plan.

In response to research subquestion ten concerning effective means of plan evaluation once implemented, the literature on assessment and evaluation was further reviewed to determine basic principles of effective evaluation as well as model approaches used at other institutions. The Program Evaluation Kit, edited by Herman (1987) as well as guidebooks on Assessment such as the text by Nichols (1989) were consulted. The responses of individuals interviewed from other colleges were also reviewed. Consideration was given to the appropriate individuals to involve in evaluation, including students, faculty, administrators and/or outside consultants or advisors. Finally, a time frame for plan evaluation was determined.

The compiled results from the Assessment Committee's feedback and the literature review on effective plan evaluation led to the development of the final plan for core curricular assessment as fully described in Chapter 4 and outlined in Appendix K. Addressing research subquestion eleven, formative evaluation of the final core curriculum assessment plan, as developed and revised through committee deliberations, was obtained through yet another review by the faculty Assessment Committee which approved the plan

and forwarded it with certain concerns to the dean and vice president for academic affairs. Additional formative plan evaluation occurred with its submission to the SACS accreditation review committee which visited Brenau.

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Results of the Literature Review and Applicability to Brenau's Evolving Plan

A review of the literature on outcomes assessment in the United States, particularly in the 1980s, revealed not only the motivations behind the current movement but ideas and recommendations for workable means of structuring a college core curricular outcomes assessment plan. Four specific areas of concern were researched in response to research subquestions one through four (see Chapter 3) and in an effort to guide the development of a core curricular assessment plan at Brenau College: (a) the historical background, origins and philosophical basis of the assessment movement, particularly in the 1980s; (b) prevailing definitions of the principle assessment terminology (assessment, outcomes, institutional effectiveness and accountability) frequently used in the assessment literature, as well as the cited purposes and the various levels of assessment suggested; (c) the SACS criteria on institutional effectiveness and their relation to core curriculum assessment; and (d) current practice in core curricula assessment nationwide.

Background and Philosophical Basis of Assessment Movement and the Impact on Brenau College

The 1980s assessment movement had a unique focus in its emphasis on quality through the measurement of real behavioral outcomes of higher education, concentrating on accountability, cost effectiveness and overall institutional effectiveness, particularly in educational programs. At the root of this focus was public criticism of higher education, expressed through a series of national reports and publications (Naisbitt, 1984; National Commission, 1983; Study Group, 1984; Project, 1985; Boyer, 1986; AASCU, 1986; Hirsch 1987; National Governors Association, 1987), expressing concern over the decline of American economic strength and international competiveness, the lack of preparation of the American labor force, and the lack of product quality from the American educational system in general. Demands for reform led to a series of recommendations for higher education in particular, to include systematic assessment of student knowledge and skill development over the college years (Study Group, 1984). It was further suggested that such assessment be used to evaluate and improve advising, curriculum, and student programming. A comprehensive approach to accountability was the recurring theme (Project, 1985) designed to dispel a public perception of irresponsibility in higher education. The AAC report (Project, 1985) also recommended that assessment should produce hard evidence at

graduation of the cummulative difference the curriculum made in a student's capacity, and such student assessments and program evaluation should be a continuous process.

Thus in order for Brenau's core assessment plan to be philosophically in line with the national movement it was determinined that the Brenau plan should be viewed as part of a broader effort to measure and demonstrate institutional effectiveness, that results must be used for program improvement, and that evaluation should be continuous. In addition, whatever evidence was collected should clearly demonstrate the cummulative difference made by the core curriculum. These concepts, it was determined, should be incorporated into goal and assumption statements prefacing the assessment plan, as well as being the basis for a section calling for regular plan reevaluation.

The background literature review further indicated that the federal govenrment had added reinforcement to the national trend demanding improvement of undergaduate education and assessment of student learning. Nichols and Wolff (1990:81) stated that by the mid 1980s,

> the call for an assessment of educational accomplishments, originally placed in the context of overall improvement in undergraduate higher education, had become a separate initiative as the centerpiece for the federal government's higher education policy under Secretary William Bennett.

In an address to the American Council on Education in 1985, Bennett (1985:25) said,

> Colleges should state their goals, measure their success in meeting those goals, and make the results

> available to everyone.... If institutions don't assess their own performance, others--either states or commercial outfits--will most likely do it.

Bennett's emphasis on assessment resulted in changes being made in the federal regulations through which the government recognizes the Council on Postsecondary Education (COPA). In 1988, Bennett's proposed rule change provisions were adopted, barring federal student aid to institutions not accredited by agencies requiring documentation of the effectiveness of their programs (Federal Register, 1987:25088-25099). This in turn forced regional accrediting boards, like the Southern Association (SACS) which accredits Brenau, to develop and impose new measures of outcomes and effectiveness in addition to their traditional criteria for accreditation.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) took an early lead in responding to the general state of public discontent with the product of higher education and to the associated demands for assessment. A proposed criterion on Institutional Effectiveness was adopted by the College Delegate Assembly of SACS in December of 1984 and required institutions requesting accreditation to focus on educational and other institutional results, in addition to the traditional focus on inputs and process criteria. As stated by Folger and Harris (1989:3), the model envisioned by SACS would require institutions to set out a clear purpose and to focus on it, provide a distinctive service, be efficient, cost

effective, and evaluate services and results frequently. Consistent with their philosophy on institutional diversity, SACS guidelines allowed institutions "a great deal of autonomy in deciding what to assess and . . . how to assess outcomes," emphasizing, however, that the goal of the SACS evaluation process was to guide and help improvement efforts (Folger and Harris, 1989:8).

The aforementioned federal guidelines as well as the resulting Southern Association criteria would require serious considertion in the formulation of the Brenau core assessment plan. In particular a balance would be needed between assessments which were primarily aimed a satisfying external requirements and those which were solely designed to inform program improvement. The standardized ETS Academic Profile or the ACT COMP test appeared to be possible options for the collection of long-range value-added data, rapidly, with manageable cost and minimum effort, and which would simultaneously address SACS effectiveness criteria. However, the use of a questionnaire, portfolios, and interviews, while more qualitative and more time consuming, seemed to ensure a better match between specific institutional goals and measurement techniques. Both types of approaches would require consideration.

The continuing background literature review for this study uncovered Banta's (1989b) suggestion that the assessment movement had finally passed the consciousness-

raising stage and had entered an intensive implementation phase. Institutions were experimenting with various methods and some had actually "institutionalized" assessment (Banta, 1989b:3). However, lack of consensus in the definition of several assessment-related terms still presented an obstacle "to the advancement of the assessment agenda at the national level" (Terenzini, 1989a:646). Variations in the meaning of (a) assessment, (b) outcomes, (c) accountability, and (d) institutional effectiveness as well as varying understandings of the purposes of assessment or the targeted levels of assessment, contributed to confusion in the field and, according to Terenzini (1989a), could threaten successful assessment. Therefore a study of the usage of these terms was undertaken to further guide development of Brenau's core assessment plan.

Definitions, Purposes, and Levels in Assessment and Applicability to Brenau

Terenzini (1989b) stated that the term assessment could refer to testing of individual students, or variably to a review of general education programs or to a series of surveys of alumni. Alexander and Stark (1986) suggested the term was sometimes used interchangeably with "evaluation" or "measurement". Krotseng (1989) pointed out that many academicians associated assessment with testing alone, though she clarified testing was only one part of assessment. Banta (1988) defined outcomes assessment by

recognizing and differentiating three different levels of assessment:

a. student performance on specified measures of development;
b. program strengths and weaknesses; and
c. institutional effectiveness.

Ewell (1984: 7) defined assessment as "the systematic examination of educational outcomes." Davis (1989) categorized definitions of assessment in the literature into broad and narrow viewpoints. The narrower view of assessment was "specifically tied to student learning, knowledge, skills, and outcomes" as described by Marchese, Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (Davis, 1989:7). This view focused on the extent to which students met curricular goals, mastered prescribed subject matter, and acquired the skills of an educated person. The broader definition used by Boyer and Ewell was defined by Davis (1989:7) as "processes that provide information about individual students, about curricula or programs, about institutions or about entire systems of institutions."

As Terenzini (1989b) suggested, supporting both Davis' (1989) and Banta's (1988) views, both the focus and unit or level of assessment must be clarified in order to specifically define the meaning of assessment in any given instance. He recommended (Terenzini, 1989b) a "two by two matrix" approach to categorize the focus of assessment as either designed (a) for enhancing the teaching/learning experience, or (b) for accountability to some external body, and to determine the unit or level of assessment as

either (a) individual students, or (b) groups (at either the course, program, department or campus level).

As with the term "assessment", the term "outcome" was used in the literature by different people for different purposes. Ewell (1983) pointed out that research scholars, faculty, college administrators, student-personnel professionals, and state governing boards all used the expression "student outcome," but they might variably be referring to short-term cognitive development, long-term changes in behavior, retention or graduation rates, favorable job placement or graduate school acceptance, or perhaps individual student successes or failures. The one unifying theme in each definition was that they all dealt with the impact of college on students.

Diane Halpern (1987:3) maintained that "The purpose of student outcomes assessment is to provide an index of what and how much students are learning." Despite variations in the objectives and uses of assessment, most have focused on student gains in cognitive development, knowledge base, and various attitudes associated with college education. Halpern's definition of student outcomes assessment incorporated Astin's concept of value-added, where outcomes reflected educational gains when comparisons were made between freshmen and seniors (Diane Halpern, 1987).

Nichols' (1989) view on outcomes assessment emphasized its inclusion within an overall program of institutional

effectiveness. He suggested the importance of keeping assessment atuned to each particular campus environment.

Ewell and Lisensky (1988) reiterated Nichols'(1989) point that the meaning of insitutional effectiveness must be identified in an institutional context, taking into consideration a college's unique mission, goals, students, and tradition. Both Nichols (1989) and Ewell and Lisensky (1988) recognized the common components of effective institutions to include explicit means for effectively assessing the degree of student attainment of clearly identified outcomes, and the use of assessment results to improve or change intentions or operations of a program. Thus, student outcomes assessment, as asserted by Ewell (1985b), is only one aspect of an accountability system. But as Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (1987:4) stated, "Because the primary goals of most colleges and universities concern student learning, . . . the assessment of student outcomes is fundamental to assessment for accountability."

Definititions of "accountability" in the literature generally revolved around the accreditation process or state reporting requirements (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988; Jacobi, Astin and Ayala, 1987; Pascarella, 1989; Hutchings and Marchese, 1990). However, both Ewell (1985a) and Hutchings and Marchese (1990) acknowledged the importance of recognizing that outcomes assessment should ultimately be accountable for improving teaching and learning, and addressing an institution's responsibility to deliver what

is promised at recruitment, in line with a student's investment of time, effort and money.

The review of the literature on definitions in assessment suggested the need to include a number of important clarifications in the Brenau core assessment plan. The core assessment effort would need to be identified as one part of a broader institutional effectiveness model. Furthermore, the primary focus of Brenau core assessment would have to be stated, distinguishing between program evaluation and individual student evaluation. Finally, an additional clarification of terms and purposes would require inclusion in the Brenau plan of an affirmation that all core assessment at Brenau should ideally contribute to the teaching/learning experience, not interfere with it. It would appear important in terms of faculty morale and involvement, particularly in a private institution, to adhere to this focus while simultaneously addressing external requirements.

SACS Criteria and Core Assessment at Brenau

Diane Halpern (1987) acknowledged that most outcomes assessment programs were undertaken for a variety of purposes. However, as asserted by Jacobi, Astin and Ayala (1987), among the primary reasons cited in the literature was to establish accountability for external agencies, including regional accrediting associations.

Each of the regional accrediting associations in the United States, as reported by Folger and Harris' (1989), has developed a set of specific expectations and requirements for assessment results in response to public, political and government pressures of recent years. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools was no exception. Yet Folger and Harris emphasized that the challenge faced by institutions beginning outcomes assessment programs "is to develop one (assessment program) that serves its own needs as well as meeting the requirements of the accrediting association or the state or other governing body" (1989:10). As previoulsy stated, Brenau's assessment plan would need to incorporate this challenge.

Specific SACS Criteria impacting the development of a core curricular assessment plan were found in the Criteria for Accreditation, Commission on Colleges (SACS,1989-1990) under section III, "Institutional Effectiveness," Section 3.1 entitled "Planning and Evaluation," Section 4.1, "Undergraduate Education Program," and Subsection 4.1.2, "Undergraduate Completion Requirements," Subsection 4.1.3, "Undergraduate Curriculum," and Subsection 4.1.4, "Undergraduate Instruction." In summary, the Criteria required institutions "to evaluate effectiveness and to use the results in a broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation process" (SACS, 1989-1990:13). Though SACS did not prescribe a specific format, it required an institution to "define its expected educational results and describe

how the achievement of these results will be ascertained" (SACS, 1989-1990:14). SACS described the elements of an effective process to include broad-based involvement of faculty and administration, the establishment of a clearly defined purpose, the formulation of educational goals consistent with purpose, the development of procedures for evaluating the extent of achievement of those goals, and the use of results to improve institutional effectiveness (SACS, 1989-1990).

The Brenau core curricular assessment plan would need to be designed to address these SACS suggestions. Since the Brenau faculty had already determined expected or desired outcomes in conjunction with a review of institutional purpose, the assessment plan was primarily needed to establish evaluation procedures and ensure use of the results.

An additional suggestion in the Criteria (SACS, 1989-1990) urged institutions to "ascertain periodically the change in academic achievement of their students" (SACS,1989-1990:14), encouraging the use of any of a variety of means to evaluate instructional programs. Mentioned were such means as peer evaluations, structured interviews with students and graduates, pre- and post-testing, surveys of recent graduates or employers, scores on standardized or local exams, etc. The Brenau plan would thus need to incorporate a wide variety of assessment approaches.

Specific reference was made in the Undergraduate Education section (4.1) of the SACS Criteria (1989-1990) to core curricular elements which institutions were expected to assess as part of the accreditation process. These included: demonstration of competence in reading, writing, oral communication, fundamental mathematical skills and basic computer skills; and inclusion in the curriculum of at least one content course each in humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and the natural sciences/mathematics. All content areas mentioned were already in the curriculum and being generally assessed in the required classes. Current practice at Brenau would require investigation to ensure that the skills assessments cited by SACS (1989-1990) were taking place and/or included in the developing assessment plan.

Additional insight into the underlying expectations of SACS criteria was obtained from comments made at an ASHE graduate student seminar in November 1989 by the Executive Director of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association (SACS). Rogers asserted that the major purposes of accreditation were to encourage institutional improvement and establish minimal levels of acceptable educational quality. He suggested the SACS requirement of outcomes assessment evolved from recommendations of the Governors' Report in 1986, and that SACS, of all the regional accreditors, had responded the most aggressively. Rogers reiterated that a variety of means of assessment

were acceptable to meet SACS criteria, including general education exams, portfolios, and national exams in major fields.

In response to these expectations stated by Rogers the Brenau plan would require, as previously acknowledged, a variety of assessment methodologies, including some demonstration of minimal levels of educational quality. It was concluded that the latter might best be demonstrated by inclusion in the plan of a standardized test of general education providing national norms for comparison.

To obtain further and updated information on the SACS criteria and how they should be interpreted when developing a core curricular assessment plan, as well as to determine the anticipated future of the criteria on institutional effectiveness, a personal interview was conducted with the associate executive director of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association. He recommended the use of sampling techniques, initially at least, on any new approach until experience showed it to be useful and cost effective. He also suggested institutions should experiment with different means of getting representative input for program (such as core curriculum) level assessment, since the "program level is what SACS is primarily looking for" (Sites, 1990). Finally, he recommended consideration of both a freshman entry and senior year exit survey as possibly one part of the core curriculum academic assessment, allowing students to

identify program strengths and weaknesses, or areas still needing improvement.

Several of the above suggestions had applicability to the development of the Brenau core assessment plan, especially the emphasis on a program level focus for the plan. The sampling concept recommended could be usefully applied to the administration of a standardized test, portfolios, or interview processes initiated to assess the Brenau core program. The recommendation of a student survey to obtain self-reported perceived growth in desired core curricular outcomes was likewise noted as potentially suitable to Brenau.

A final source of guidance with respect to SACS criteria and core curricular assessment was Folger and Harris's (1989) Assessment in Accreditation. The authors point out that it is difficult to determine what is appropriate to assess as demonstrative of a collegiate education as there is little concensus on what constitutes an educated person and no national concensus on general education. Since faculties find it difficult to reach consensus on the goals and objectives of general education in terms of student achievement, according to Folger and Harris it is even harder to "get agreement on means of assessing . . ." (1989:82). The authors recommend that in their response to accreditation requirements, "institutions should design an assessment system that meets their own needs for information and better decision making . . ."

(Folger and Harris, 1989:84). They likewise recommend keeping it simple, setting priorities, assessing a few outcomes initially, not attempting more than the institution could support, and getting multiple perspectives, both quantitative and qualitative.

It was concluded that these recommendations would be critical in developing the Brenau core assessment plan. The sheer number of core outcomes which had been approved by the faculty of Brenau, particularly with respect to content knowledge, would necessitate setting priorities and simplifying the assessment process. (See pages six and seven and Appendix A.) To keep the program manageable, already existing efforts, such as the math and English placement testing, would need to be documented and coordinated and content knowledge assessment would need to be located in the required courses and in the hands of the teaching faculty supervised by the department chair. A broad and perhaps nationally-normed means of evaluating these content outcomes in conjunction with the assessment of basic collegiate level skills was viewed as potentially necessary to tie the existing assessment elements together and provide some means of overall summative program evaluation.

Current Practice in Core Outcomes Assessment Nationwide and Applicability to Brenau

While the ultimate goal of the SACS institutional effectiveness criteria is clear, those criteria offered

little guidance with regard to specific organization of an outcomes assessment plan, or specific measurement methodologies or instruments. However, the literature offered a number of quite diverse examples of how various institutions approached outcomes assessment, specifically in the core curriculum. A review of these examples provided rich suggestions, many applicable to the Brenau plan either immediately or potentially in the future.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) published a working paper in 1990 entitled State Initiatives in Assessment and Outcomes Measurement: Tools for Teaching and Learning in the 1990s (Paulson, 1990). Discovered in the descriptions were varying combinations of the following assessment approaches:

rising junior writing proficiency exams
team-graded common course finals
general education field exams
quantitative reasoning proficiency tests
senior year capstone seminars
commercial tests of general education learning
student followup surveys
rising junior assessments
value-added measures
math and English proficiency testing
assessment of critical thinking
student focus groups
General Intellectual Skills Test (New Jersey)
College Level Academic Skills Test (Florida rising junior college level reading, computation, writing gatekeeping test)
Georgia Regents Test (writing and reading comprehenstion, required to graduate).

The ECS survey results supported Ewell's (1987:9) assertion that the "major hallmark of assessment efforts continues to be their diversity." It was again concluded that Brenau's plan would require a variety of

methodological approaches as already suggested, with particular attention to the inclusion of reading comprehension and writing ability evaluations such as are required of state institutions in Georgia. Continuation of the existing in-class, value-added math and English proficiency testing was clearly important to include in Brenau's plan. Team-graded common course finals, and the concept of a senior capstone seminar to tie together and evaluate general education outcomes, appeared to be two approaches to keep in mind and even recommend, but not yet impose on the Brenau faculty as part of a core assessment plan. However, some measure of critical thinking development did seem advisable.

Also as evidenced by the ECS Survey results (Paulson, 1990) the use of standardized tests to meet assessment requirements has become very widespread, though not without extensive criticism. Vanderment (1987) cited California State University's objections to evaluation of the outcomes of the undergraduate experience based primarily on student performance on nationally normed, standardized tests. Opponents felt such evaluation would force the curricula into narrow bands of demonstrable outcomes and undermine commitment to the development of critical thinking skills and ethical and creative sensibilities "that distinguish the truly educated from the adequately trained. . . ." (Vanderment, 1987:26). Nevertheless, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville used the ACT COMP to assess student

development in general education objectives, administering the test to freshmen and seniors since 1983 to compile longitudinal data. Banta and Moffett (1987) reported that early results showed a need to strengthen problem solving across the general education curriculum. They also emphasized that UKT evaluates strengths and weaknesses in programs, not individual students, and though students are required to participate they are not penalized by results. Furthermore, other tests and surveys were used in addition to the standardized ACT COMP. The argument for compiling longitudinal data was one convincing reason to include a standardized test in the Brenau plan for program assessment purposes. No penalties would need be imposed and other assessment instruments would complement the standardized test.

Serving as a potential model for Brenau's approach, Northeast Missouri State University used the ACT and the ACT COMP tests of general knowledge in support of the university's value-added approach to assessment. Testing at the beginning of the freshman year was compared to results at the end of the sophomore year to demonstrate growth. Astin, a major proponent of the value-added perspective, has suggested that students matriculating for the first time are generally in an extremely cooperative frame of mind and are ideal subjects for pre-tests or placement tests necessary as the benchmark for value-added comparisons; he added that post-tests might have to be

mandated, however, as it is hard to congregate the same group again (Astin, 1987). Based on Astin's theory, Brenau's plan could most productively schedule initial administration of a standardized benchmark test, for either general education overall and/or for critical thinking, during Freshman Orientation.

The experience of Trenton State in New Jersey likewise provided insight into the use of standardized tests for assessment. A careful study of available commercial tests was conducted by Trenton State and the decision made to administer the ETS Test of General Education and the ACT COMP to assess the general education core. Curry and Hager (1987) reported that comparisons were planned between native and transfer seniors, native seniors with national norms, native seniors with freshmen, and freshmen with their own senior grades three years later. Results of the testing raised several concerns regarding standardized tests: if GPA was not affected, students did not try; four hours of testing was too much without any personal gain; the best seniors did not present themselves thus biasing the sample; and it was impossible to find a test that measured all of Trenton's outcomes. Finally, Trenton officials were unprepared for the small difference in raw scores between the freshman and the senior years, and therefore recommended "that results be interpreted with caution, and that several forms of assessment be used" (Curry and Hager, 1987:60).

Based in part on the Trenton findings, it was determined that the shorter versions of available standardized tests should be investigated for use at Brenau to avoid the problems encountered at Trenton and other schools with four hours of testing, while still providing a nationally normed group measure of general education outcomes. Individual subscores would likely not be available with the short version but were unnecessary given the program level focus projected for the Breanu core assessment plan.

Evolving in part due to the dissatistaction expressed in higher education with overdependency on standardized testing, the use of portfolios to evaluate general education programming appeared to be the newest idea in the literature. The main advantages cited by an Exxon Education Foundation Study Group (Forrest, 1990) for the use of portfolios were that they draw upon and support current teaching activities, they track students over time, and they use several assessment techniques simultaneously. In addition they were seen as potentially useful for student advising and later on in the student's job search. Examples of portfolio use (Forrest, 1990) included:

a. unplanned portfolios to assess the "de facto" as well as planned outcomes of a general education program;
b. portfolios to assess problem solving, communication and metacognitive processing skills;
c. portfolios to measure writing and critical thinking outcomes;
d. portfolios to collect feedback on all detailed general educaiton goals, from the frshman to the

senior year;
e. sample freshmen and senior portfolios (with student participants paid) reviewed by a paid faculty committee looking for achievement of five broad goals of general education;
f. portfolios as narrative transcripts on all student; and finally
g. portfolios to assess writing across the core curriculum.

A pilot portfolio project had already been initiated with entering freshmen at Brenau in fall 1990, and was an existing element that would obviously be included in the final core assessment plan under development. General education had already been defined by the faculty approved Taxonomy of core curricular outcomes (Appendix A), and generally fit one of Forrest's (1990) definitions of general education, that is, coursework plus selected out-of-class activities. It had been determined that all outcomes in the Taxonomy should potentially be represented in a student's portfolio and teaching faculty had been asked to submit representative work each quarter. It was concluded this process should continue with analysis of a sample of portfolios to take place each spring by Assessment Committee members. Cost of such a process would be limited essentially to supplies, the clerical work of a student assistant, and committee members' time.

In addition to the focus on portfolios, several more current core assessment practices were reviewed in the literature and suggested additional approaches to consider as Brenau's program and plan for assessement evolved. In particular the assessment plan at King's College, a private

baccalaureate college in Pennsylvania, as described by Paskow (1990) in the AAHE Assessment Programs and Projects Directory, seemed to have applicability to Brenau. All faculty and departments at King's share common responsibility for transferable skills of liberal learning such as writing, critical thinking, and valuing across the curriculum, including in the major. Assessment measures are embedded in coursework, although until recently, the ACT COMP was administered to freshmen and seniors. It was eliminated when it was judged by a faculty committee to be incongruent with the college's course-embedded approach to assessment. Currently, the college is working on developing new strategies for student self-assessment, a more sophisticated approach to portfolios, and the design of a system to collect documentation of student learning useful for program evaluation. The King's College model suggested the need for inclusion in the Brenau plan of some type of assessments across the curriculum to measure growth in the various critical thinking and values clarification outcomes in the Taxonomy. Like the King's plan, it was concluded these might best be core-course-embedded assessments as opposed to relying only on additional standardized testing.

The Appalachian College Assessment Consortium, consisting of private, liberal arts, mostly church-related colleges in Appalachia, adopted the consortium approach to assessment primarily in search of a cost effective means of

evaluating general education (Paskow, 1990). The major external impetus for the project was the criteria of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) relating to institutional effectiveness. Among the strategies used by the group was the interviewing of a sample of seniors each spring by a faculty member asking questions designed to draw on all areas of their general education. Interviews were taped, transcribed, and analyzed for indications of success in reaching certain general education goals. A second assessment technique involved a freshman writing/placement exercise which was returned to students when they became seniors for revision based upon their four years at the college. Essays were read for demonstration of growth in writing skills as well as in content and self-awareness, and were used as the basis for an interview with a faculty member. Finally, the consortium pilot-tested the ETS Academic Profile test and had plans to administer it to entering freshmen and seniors.

The Appalachian Consortium (Paskow, 1990) provided one more example of small college use of the ETS Academic Profile to gather longitudinal data on value-added by the core curriculum. It was thus determined that the ETS test and the other most often mentioned standardized test of general education, the ACT COMP, should be carefully considered to meet Brenau's needs. Also based on the Appalachian model, portfolio review interviews were

considered a viable means of further determining the institution's success in reaching the stated core curricular goals. Since the Brenau portfolio project would not include seniors for another three years, interviews would have to initially include only those students for whom portfolios had been maintained.

Further contributing to Brenau's evolving plan, Ewell and Lisensky (1988) offered a description of core curricular assessment approaches taken by a group of ten private, liberal arts colleges in response to accreditation guidelines on institutinal effectivenss. Supported by the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education (CAPHE), the effort was aimed at finding "ways to assess those more subtle, but also more valued outcomes of education. Unless we can do so," stated the authors, "assessment runs the danger of trivializing, not enhancing, higher education" (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988:9). They pointed out that "liberal education tends to be an arena in which many promises are made but little evidence is gathered" (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988:26). It was expected that the claims could be met by contact with a set of course distribution requirements, but no systematic means of assessing success had been developed. CAPHE study participants adopted such approaches as: documented efforts to review course syllabi to discover the degree to which expressed values of the institution were actually present in instruction; and efforts to study and document the

differences between the stated mission of the college and the behavioral mission revealed by close observation. Most of the group found a need to express their goals in more precise behavioral terms and to reduce the list of expressed goals to manageable length or a few central themes. They also recognized the importance of finding and emphasizing their areas of true distinctiveness. They were generally encouraged to discover and work with the information they had at hand or readily available (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988).

As suggested by the CAPHE study, the Brenau assessment plan would need to include among its assumptions the expectation that standardized core syllabi would include the faculty approved outcomes identified as addressed in required core coursework. It was noted that the CAPHE study recommended the reduction of outcome goals to manageable length and a few central themes to facilitate successful and meaningful assessment efforts. Although Brenau's outcomes did not fit that description, the Brenau project was deemed to be past the stage of goal definition and it was determined the core assessment plan must focus on the core outcomes as already formulated, at least for the time being.

Telephone Interview Results

To further determine current practice in core curricular assessment which might contribute to the development of Brenau's plan, five institutions were

selected to be contacted directly by telephone. The major criterion for selection was membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Questions guiding each of the interviews are reproduced in Appendix F along with more detailed summaries of the interview results.

Roanoke College
Interview Results

Located in Salem, Virgian, Roanoke was selected for consultation due to its recent revision of the general education curriculum. Both the director of institutional research and the director of general education were interviewed. (See Appendix F.) A brief summary of the interview follows.

A consultant had been hired to assist Roanoke in responding to SACS institutional effectiveness guidelines as well as to help design maneageable ways to measure the new core curriculum. One of the strongest messages received from the consulting visit was not to make the whole process unduly complicated. The concept of program evaluation on a sampling basis was recommended over the individual student outcomes evaluation approach. As a result, Roanoke was not taking the Alverno approach to individual student outcomes but rather focusing, as suggested, on program assessment and SACS institutional effectivenss criteria. No means of measuring the overall core had been determined. However a broad capstone Senior Reading Course was projected as the most likely point of

overall evaluation as opposed to the use of standardized tests, despite the recognized advantage of obtaining national norms for comparison. An additional recommendation of Roanoke's consultant was the use of a senior exit interview to assess in the majors, and it was believed that this approach could also integrate assessment of the general education outcomes.

A Program Evaluation Panel of faculty to evaluate all the college's programs every five years, including the general education program, was also described as part of Roanoke's assessment approach. Two outside evaluators were invited to make a two day site visit and report back to the Panel in writing, evaluating the program and the Panel's own findings.

The use of portfolios at Roanoke had been restricted to the full year Writing Course required of all students. No evaluation of the work beyond the class instructor's had been undertaken. Obtaining a writing sample at matriculation on a values-related topic to add to the student's file had been discussed for the purpose of baseline data. Roanoke's consultant had recommended that portfolios not be maintained on all students but rather on a sample, focusing on the median performers and using independent evaluators. Portfolios had originally been anticipated for use in advising at Roanoke, but it was determined they did not have the funds to support the project. Furthermore, the academic computer center was

being overloaded by the required writing submissions for all students, and faculty support was problematic.

Roanoke reported no required speech course but a plan to build oral communication outcomes into the majors, an approach supported by the consultant. The only area in which Roanoke was considering use of a standardized test was reported to be in the values outcomes given the fact that the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) was already in use with freshmen; it was under consideration for readministration to juniors to measure growth and change.

The Roanoke interviews provided various ideas which could be adapted to the Brenau plan being developed as well as confirming several directions already discovered. Roanoke's consultant reiterated the sound advice to keep the assessment project manageable using sampling techniques whenever possible. The idea of maintaining portfolios on only a sample of students was not perceived as initially feasible, however, for the Brenau plan, largely due to the smaller enrollment at Brenau. Instead it was determined that portfolios should be developed for all entering freshmen and maintained on any who stayed at the institution through the senior year. For greater manageability portfolios would not be developed on students transfering into Brenau, however, and students leaving the institution would cause the numbers of portfolios maintained on upperclassmen to dwindle,

essentially resulting in a sampling of those classes. Careful note was made, however, of faculty concerns and computer center overload experienced at Roanoke in conjunction with their portfolio project.

The Roanoke concept of a senior capstone course used to evaluate core curricular outcomes in lieu of a standardized test was appealing but required the specially designed and integrated curriculum Roanoke had recently developed. When and if Brenau moved in the direction of assessing core outcomes within the majors and across the curriculum, this idea might have applicability, but it was not recommended for the current Brenau plan under development. Instead, the feasability of using a standardized test of general education, at least for the time being, was reinforced by Larson's (1990) comment that the value of standardized testing was its ability to provide national norms for comparison.

Another assessment approach gleaned from the Roanoke interviews that found applicability in the Brenau assessment plan was Roanoke's model of a Program Evaluation Panel of faculty plus two outside advisors to evaluate programs like the core curriculum. The Roanoke idea suggested that summative evaluation of the Brenau core curriculum and its assessment plan might reasonably be achieved via the College's traditional disciplinary analysis process every five years, with faculty reviewers complemented by one or more outside evaluators invited

precisely for that purpose. Every tenth year the SACS reaffirmation visiting committee could serve as the outside program evaluators, complementing the Brenau self study participants assigned to review the core study program.

Finally, Roanoke's approaches to speech and values assessment were also noted, whether for the present Brenau plan or future efforts. In particular, the CIRP instrument, already used with Brenau Freshmen under the auspices of the Student Development Office, would merit review and consideration.

Millsaps College
Interview Results

Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi was the second institution selected for direct consultation due to the recent participation of two Millsaps faculty at the Memphis State University Conference on Assessment. Their topic had been portfolio assessment in general education, an approach popular in the literature and of interest to Brenau. Both the associate dean of the college and the chairman of the core council (also a presenter) were interviewed.

In brief, Millsap's core was described as highly related to the Alverno approach, and the Clayton State adaptation, with certain abilities identified they hoped students would develop during their tenure at the college. Comprehensive exams for seniors were used to demonstrate the acquisition of these abilities. The upper level writing course required for graduation demanded a portfolio

to be evaluated by the Writing Council with representatives from each academic division. Millsaps had determined it impossible to assess everything and decided to focus on writing and thinking skills across the general education curriculum, opting for the portfolio measurement approach as opposed to standardized testing.

The Millsaps model suggested several excellent directions for Brenau's core curricular assessments in the future, but like the Roanoke model was far more integrated in terms of assessing broad outcomes like critical thinking and writing across the curriculum. The integrated approach precluded the need for standardized testing at Millsaps; however, it was determined that Brenau's program had not yet evolved to the same point where the portfolio requirements were clarified enough to totally replace the information that could be provided by standardized testing of general education outcomes.

Memphis State University
Interview Results

Memphis State University had recently hosted an assessment conference at which two Memphis faculty addressed the topic of assessing general education. Thus interviews were arranged and conducted with one presenter, also an institutional researcher, as well as with the director of general education.

It was reported that Memphis State had recently moved from its old, largely distribution-oriented core to a new,

largely prescribed, general education core with integrated coursework. Involvement or engagement of students in the two curricula was compared via Pace's CSEQ (College Student Experience Questionnaire) as a means of assessing the core program and more specifically the college's "civic participation" outcome. It was found that, in general, the new prescribed interdisciplinary core resulted in more student engagement and involvement.

The CSEQ was not perceived to provide significant enough assessment results with respect to specific Brenau core outcomes to warrant the expense of a standardized instrument. It was determined that Brenau's volunteerism or civic responsibility outcome/requirement could instead be measured via Brenau's existing ACT I freshman orientation program using reporting forms to be completed by the student and the organization for which she volunteered her time.

The assessment of general education at Memphis State was further described in terms of a two by four matrix. The two levels of assessment were the course level and the program level. Course level assessment was divided into Student Learning, Student Perceptions and Faculty Perceptions. Program Level assessment was undertaken in those three categories as well as a fourth area, Student Behavior. (See Appendix F for details.)

The development of Memphis State's new core was described as a three hour per week, year long project. It

was strongly suggested in the interview that schools developing core assessment approaches adhere to the golden rule of assessment: start small, involve the faculty in all stages, and use existing materials.

Like Memphis State's approach to assessment, a focus on both the course level and the program was determined to be best for Brenau's focus, except no specific approaches would be imposed on the Brenau faculty teaching required core coursework as in the Memphis State model. It was determined best not to recommend the course level assessments in the current Brenau plan but rather to include as an assumption the expectation that departments and core teaching faculty should develop and be accountable for their own means of assessing the results/effectiveness of their coursework in relation to the designated outcomes. Many Brenau faculty were already having students self-assess the acquisition of their course's general education goals as in the Memphis State model, and while recommended, it was not a required approach. It was determined for the time being faculty should simply be expected to assess in their chosen manner, though required to report results and the use of results quarterly to their department chair. Department chairs in turn could be expected to compile these assessment responses each spring as part of their annual report to the vice president for academic affairs. In addition, and similar to the Memphis State approach, a locally-developed questionnaire could be incorporated into

the Brenau plan to investigate student perceptions of gain in the core curricular outcomes while at the college. The instrument was projected to be administered in conjunction with standardized testing of core outcomes.

Carson-Newman College
Interview Results

Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee was recommended for consultation by an associate executive director of SACS and an interview was held with the dean of academic special programs. It was reported that six broad goals permeated the Carson-Newman general education program and a variety of distribution requirements guided students in course selection to reach these goals. (See Appendix F.)

With respect to assessment Carson-Newman was reported to be in the process of developing a plan. Currently in place was a senior survey for graduating students, consisting of self-reported gains in the six competencies of the core. The Carson-Newman senior survey appeared to have a focus similar to the proposed Brenau locally developed questionnaire to be administered in conjunction with a standardized test of general education.

An evolving element of the assessment plan at Carson-Newman was described as a senior interview with a faculty member. Probing questions on the general education competenices sought to determine level of knowledge and growth. Based on their collective findings, interviewing faculty reflect on the state of the general education program and make recommendations for improvements. The

above approach was piloted with a consortium of colleges and, though they discovered it was hard to be efficient and guarantee useful information, the experience proved to be useful to faculty involved.

Similar to the Carson-Newman pilot study, portfolio review interviews have been proposed by the Assessment Committee as part of the Brenau core assessment plan, initially only with the classes entering under the new curriculum and for whom portfolios would be maintained. Unlike the Carson-Newman model therefore, seniors would not be interviewed until the program had been in place for four years. This slow start approach it was concluded, however, might allow for refinement of and thus greater benefit from the interview process over time.

Neither standardized testing nor portfolio assessment of general education was reportedly being used at Carson-Newman. Despite the fact that much reluctance was expressed among the faculty, it was reported that the college would consider standardized testing options in the future, though it was inclined to look for more qualitative approaches to assesment.

Clayton State College
Interview Results

Clayton State College in Morrow, Georgia had been at the forefront of the assessment movement in Georgia for numerous years and was therefore selected for direct consultation. The assistant to the vice president for

academic affairs and director of general education was contacted. He stated that the outcomes assessment oriented general education program was designed to develop a coherent, integrated program to help students acquire abilities and knowledge important to all graduates. Two skills and six perspectives or knowledge-based frames of reference made up the outcomes of general education. (See Appendix F.) The primary purpose of assessment at Clayton was to enhance student learning by clearly indicating expectations and by providing meaningful feedback to students. Only secondarily did assessment serve the purpose of evaluating programs. All outcomes were course embedded and integrated; there were no "do or die" assessments of a gatekeeping nature.

While Brenau's core curricular outcomes assessment program has not existed as long as nor evolved as much as the Clayton State model, nevertheless the course embedded approach has been the preferred direction at Brenau. The Clayton State experience suggested that Brenau's evolving plan should include provision for inclusion of critical thinking and values outcomes assessments within required core coursework. At present, these designated core outcomes are not officially assessed anywhere in the required core, although elective courses address the outcomes.

It was reported that Clayton State was in its third year of administering the ACT CAAP to evaluate overall

institutional effectiveness in the general education curriculum. The results were used mainly as a benchmark to compare Clayton State with the national norms and assure the institution was not doing any harm with its idiosyncratic approach to general education. This benchmark argument seemed to support use of a standard test of general education in the Brenau plan as well.

Clayton's Vice President also described a reporting requirement for faculty teaching in general education. Each was required to turn in the results or final ratings of student outcome assessments to the computer center. There a separate outcome file was maintained on each student and on each criterion, creating a paper trail to demonstrate that the required assessments of general education outcomes had been done and maintained for potential future research. The requirement served a monitoring purpose to assure the use of the course embedded assessment instruments by the teaching faculty.

Clayton States' reporting requirements were perceived to be far too complex and expensive for Brenau to consider although faculty accountability was viewed as critical to a successful program. Again it was determined that the best approach at Brenau would be to incorporate assessment reporting procedures into the regular faculty-to-chair and chairs-to-the-vice president annual reporting that already existed at the institution.

Interviews with Brenau's President and Vice President for Academic Affairs

In order to document the administrative guidelines that would influence the final form of a core curricular assessment plan at Brenau, interviews were scheduled and held with the president and with the vice president for academic affairs at the College. Actual interview questions and more detailed summaries of responses are found in Appendices D and E.

The president of Brenau College stated he did not see the assessment movement diminishing nor the SACS institutional effectiveness criteria changing in the near future. He felt SACS might offer more specific suggestions as they discovered what worked, but various models would allow schools continuing options. He deemed it foolish to go with a myriad of standardized tests.

The president supported the concept of portfolio assessment for both the faculty's and school's purposes as well as for purposes of convincing students of what they have learned, and to help them integrate past, present and future learning. He saw the portfolio as a potentially useful tool for advising and for connected learning, but not for lock-step assessment. He recommended end of the year reviews and reactions by the students.

Brenau's president expressed the hope that assessment would be undertaken not for outside bodies or even accountability to the public but rather for the sake of the institution as a means of knowing if it is accomplishing

what it claims to be doing. He was committed to finding ways to do it the least expensively as well, avoiding unnecessary purchase of standard tests in particular. He believed an assessment focus, however, would give the institution greater credibility.

In terms of initial plan development, the most significant guidance gleaned from the president's interview was to keep standardized testing to a minimum and interpret the results with caution. The president clearly supported a focus on program assessment at Brenau.

The vice president for academic affairs and dean of Brenau supported the continuation of the portfolio project piloted with freshmen in 1990 as the centerpiece of Brenau's core curricular assessment effort and reliance upon the syllabus as representative of the integrity of the curriculum. Portfolios, she felt, should attest to student performance on the outcomes stated in the syllabus for each core course, and the instructor of record should be responsible for assessing those designated outcomes/objectives. The regular evaluation system of the college, completed annually by department chairmen, would attest to the "assessors."

In addition to the portfolios, the Dean suggested the College might use a standardized test to raise core curricular and instructional issues. She suggested the College not concern itself at this point with maintaining portfolios on transfers. She also stated that

interdisciplinary outcomes, such as critical thinking, cross cultural awareness, geography and values clarification and their assessment, needed to be integrated into existing required core coursework.

In order to be in line with the views of the vice president for academic affairs therefore, a plan for core assessment at Brenau had to contain the portfolio approach supported by standardized course syllabi with core outcomes clearly stated. Latitude must be given to instructors to develop means of core course outcomes assessment, but results must be produced and reported within the college's regular reporting system. A standardized test for purposes of raising curricular and instructional issues was deemed acceptable though not viewed as the most meaningful assessment of overall core effectiveness, at least by itself. The vice president endorsed the idea of sampling only incoming freshmen for purposes of the portfolios in particular, maintaining portfolios only on persisters over their college career. Finally, the dean/vice president endorsed the concept of eventually integrating into the required core all approved core outcomes not specifically tied to required core coursework such as was the case with the faculty approved critical thinking, values, geography and cross cultural awareness outcomes.

Ongoing Assessment in Brenau Women's College Core

To best determine and outline what assessment efforts were already underway, projected, recommended or under consideration at Brenau the minutes, memos and files of the Assessment Center and the Assessment Committee (formerly the Core Curriculum Review Committee) were investigated. Specifically, a chronologically organized Assessment Center notebook labeled Minutes, Memos, Etc., 1989-1991 Summary (Brenau College Assessment Center, 1991) provided an historical background document on the origins of the assessment effort at the college as well as meeting agendas and minutes of the Assessment Committee. The historical background document entitled "Outcomes Based Curriculum Project: Brenau College" (Summer 1989) described Brenau's evolving assessment effort which started with a core curriculum review in 1983, followed by the determination of goals and outcomes by the faculty in 1987-1988. As of 1989, however, it was made clear that how to assess those outcomes was still a major issue.

A review of the Assessment Committee's meeting agendas and minutes (Brenau College Assessment Center, 1991) from fall 1989 through fall 1990 suggested the level of progress that had been made toward the development of assessment measures. Over the year and a half period, a wide variety of assessment approaches were recommended, discussed, projected and/or indicated as ongoing already at the

College. The need for a rising junior skills test or a senior exit exam, the dangers of overtesting contrasted with the need to assess the behavioral outcomes of the college overall, the value and specific design of portfolio core assessment, the appropriate means of assessing critical thinking, speaking and/or writing across the core, how to assess values outcomes, and the use of interviews to assess were among the most prevalent issues raised repeatedly in the minutes. Assessment database management was also a frequently reiterated concern.

A significant administrative directive which would have to be considered in the development of Brenau's assessment plan was indicated in the November 28, 1990 minutes (Brenau College Assessment Center, 1991) concerning the scoring of any rising junior essay promoted by the Assessment Committee. The vice president for academic affairs endorsed the Assessment Committee-suggested concept of testing sophomores but as stated in the minutes "insisted that scoring must be undertaken by the English faculty as the outcomes in question were in their domain and course structure." The committee consequently voted in favor of a rising junior evaluation of some nature as a part of core assessment, but "at the discretion of the English faculty who will have to get them graded" (Brenau College Assessment Center, 1991).

Nowhere in the assessment-related files had all the above mentioned efforts been compiled for overall

consideration and review. Therefore, in an attempt to facilitate core assessment plan development, and ultimately evaluation, the following chart was developed to organize the various assessment efforts ongoing, projected or simply discussed for consideration in the Assessment Committee.

Ongoing, Projected, and Discussed Core Assessment Efforts at Brenau College as of Fall 1990

Ongoing Efforts	Projected for Implementation	Discussed Options
Pre-post math/Algebra skills testing	Outcome check lists	Exit exams
Standardized syllabi with outcomes	Student self-assess.	Alumnae assessments
Computer skill tests (in BA105 class)	Portfolios	Institution-wide tests
Pilot portfolio assessment of core knowledge areas	Critical thinking assessment across core curriculum	Rising jr. or sr. exit gen. ed.test/essay
Faculty selection of portfolio work	Community service (values) assess. in ACT I	Values assess.
Freshman class self-assess. of predisposition to think crit.	Portfolio review interviews	Databases
	Out-of-class test of computer skills	Nat'l norm gen.ed.test
	Pre-post writing tests in Fr.Eng.	WatsonGlaser crit. think norm. test
	Outside of class assess. in geog. lang.+X-cultural awareness	Std. rater sheets for speech/ writing
	Pre-post reading tests	Portfolios for crit.thinking

Department Chair Reports of Current Core Assessment

Early in the fall quarter of 1990 according to a September 12, 1990 memo (Brenau College Assessment Center, 1991), department chairs with core responsibilities were asked to provide a summary report of the core outcomes

areas falling within their departments. Model forms were provided to the chairs. (See appendix G.) In particular, for each required core course supporting their core outcomes, they were asked to indicate (a) what specific outcomes were covered in that course, (b) what instructional activities supported each outcome, and (c) exactly how the outcome was assessed or was anticipated to be assessed in the class. Description of any summative evaluation of the outcomes, either for a specific course or for the entire outcomes area (such as "literacy skills" or the "history, politics and economics knowledge" area) was likewise requested.

The results of the above requests were compiled and a spreadsheet was developed from the reports to describe core assessment overall, particularly with regard to non-course specific outcomes and any summative types of evaluation. The spreadsheet was organized by the thirteen core outcomes areas approved by the faculty (see Taxonomy, Appendix A), keeping in mind the previously investigated SACS requirements. A copy of the spreadsheet is found in Appendix H.

Generally speaking it was discovered that formative assessment of cognitive outcomes was taking place or anticipated in the required knowledge-based classes, and the mathematics and literacy skills were being assessed in the relevant math and English courses. However, approved values clarification outcomes, global world view outcomes,

and critical thinking outcomes were only addressed haphazardly or in elective coursework. Computer competency outcomes were only addressed and assessed in an elective course. The only nationally normed testing on campus was taking place in English classes for placement purposes. No real summative evaluation of any of the thirteen core area outcomes, nor the entire core itself, was evidenced with the exception of (a) plans in the Humanities Department to develop post-measures for the literacy skills of writing, speaking and reading, and (b) the cumulative final exam/post-test given in the required algebra course. On the whole, cumulative finals were not indicated elsewhere, nor were explanations provided of any specific plan for examining and using the results of assessment to improve the program or instruction as was required by the SACS criteria. These shortcomings would require attention in Brenau's developing plan.

Initiation of Long-Range Plan for Core Assessment

The summary chart (page 118) of assessment initiatives discussed in the Assessment Committee and the spreadsheet (Appendix H) based on faculty/departmental reports of assessment activity were reviewed to guide initiation of a formalized Brenau core assessment plan. The most notable gap in the two descriptions was the lack of any final decision on a comprehensive, summative procedure to periodically assess the impact of the whole

core curriculum, as required by SACS criteria. Rising junior and senior exit exams and essays, as well as standardized testing had been proposed, but no action taken. Recognizing the benefits of using existing procedures as much as possible and initiating new efforts slowly, the frequent use of standardized tests in the current practices investigated was likewise noted as a means of establishing a benchmark against national norms. It was subsequently determined that the one new initiative that probably needed to be recommended for Brenau's plan was a standardized test of general education to assess the overall core. Such a test would preclude the immediate need for creation, validation and scoring of an in-house instrument while faculty were struggling with assessment efforts in their respective fields. Meanwhile the commercial test would meet SACS criteria and provide initial data on the core outcomes.

A meeting was scheduled with the vice president for academic affairs to present this idea since administrative approval would be needed to plan for such a significant budget item. The vice president (Sullivan, 1990b) agreed to the inclusion of the test in a formal Brenau core assessment plan with the following stipulations:

1. that the principle available tests of general education be investigated and compared, the descriptive information compiled, and a specific recommendation made;

2. that the department chairs and members of the Assessment Committee be apprised of the recommendation and its basis, and be asked to

vote on the matter. All department chairs with core course responsibilities would have to agree to the proposal.

Based on the literature review on assessment already completed, it was determined that the ACT COMP and the ETS Academic Profile were the most commonly selected standardized tests used for core assessment purposes at institutions like Brenau. Therefore, a review of these two tests was undertaken, as requested by the vice president, in order to formulate a recommendation. ACT literature (American College Testing Program, 1990 a, b, and c) was studied and compared with Educational Testing Service arguments (ETS, 1989; ETS, 1990). Consideration was given to cost, time involvement for students and faculty, and correspondence between the test and the stated outcomes of the Brenau core. The requirements stated in the SACS (1989-1990) criteria relative to demonstrating effectiveness in educational programming, especially the core, were also considered. The results were compiled in a January 5, 1991 memo (Appendix M) to the department chairs and the Assessment Committee, recommending use of the ETS Academic Profile and in fact suggesting immediate pilot testing of the Profile prior to the upcoming SACS reaccreditation visit. The pilot test seemed advisable to allow for SACS review of the results and to gain an immediate benchmark for any future administration of the test.

Response to the Academic Profile recommendation was one hundred percent affirmative. The next step was to prepare a tentative plan for core assessment at Brenau (which included the test) and to allow the Assessment Committee to react to the plan at its upcoming January 31, 1991 meeting.

An exploratory document was first drafted and circulated among Assessment Committee members to stimulate thinking on the issues, and to initiate discussion in the upcoming Assessment Committee meeting. (See Appendix I.) This initial draft document stated four basic assumptions and twenty-one questions regarding core curricular assessment at Brenau. The four assumptions in the draft were derived from the literature and current practice reviews, in conjunction with Brenau's present direction as summarized in the chart on page 118. The questions were for the most part those which had been continually posed throughout the 1989 to 1990 assessment committee deliberations as cited in the minutes (Brenau College Assessment Center, 1991), and which required decisions or deferral before a final plan for core curricular assessment could be initiated.

The first assumption in the draft document (Appendix I) recognized the need to develop individual student progress data via placement tests and in individual core classes to include faculty, student and peer evaluations. The second assumption suggested, however, that Brenau focus

data collection choices, evaluation, and reporting on the program or cohort level as opposed to the individual level. These definitions of what "asssessment" meant in the Brenau program had to be determined by clarifying the levels and purposes of assessment; such choices of focus were necessary as strongly suggested by the literature (Banta, 1988; Davis, 1989; Terenzini, 1989b).

Departmental responsibilities in core assessment were clarified in the third assumption of the draft document, wherein it was stated that departments were expected to develop means of assessing the results of their core coursework as well as a plan for using the results to improve the curriculum. The fourth assumption recognized the importance of providing for not only assessment of the parts but review and evaluation of the whole core curriculum as currently approved. Such program evaluation was an essential part of the Southern Association criteria for demonstrating institutional effectiveness which directly impacted Brenau College (SACS, 1989-1990).

Following distribution to the members of the Assessment Committee of these basic assumptions and the series of questions derived from a review of the committee's minutes (Appendix I), a second document (Appendix J) was drafted to outline in an organized fashion current assessment and various committee proposed directions in core asssessment which had been discussed, recommended and/or piloted at Brenau over the past year.

Models in the literature and those discovered by telephone interview, as previously discussed in this chapter, were taken into consideration as well and included as appropriate. Likewise the administrative preferences and guidelines gleaned from both interviews and written directives as earlier indicated were incorporated. The particularly notable addition was planned use of the ETS Academic Profile standardized test of general education, recently approved by the department chairs and the assessment committee in view of the absence of any standardized or in-house developed summative assessment of Brenau's core. For purposes of the long range plan the committee still had to decide to whom and when the test should be administered, and how often.

This second document (Appendix J) was presented to the Assessment Committee for reaction on January 31, 1991 and contained five "Assumptions" and an "Outline of Current Core Assessment Efforts." The outline was broken down into the following sections in an attempt to organize the proposed Brenau plan, even if somewhat arbitrarily, within distinct assessment categories and/or by issues that were suggested by the SACS criteria, common current practice, and recurring reference by the Brenau Assessment Committee.

I. Overall Assessment of Core
II. Value-Added (pre-post) Skill Assessments
III. Cohort Tracking over Time
IV. Computer Skill Assessment
V. Database Information
VI. Data Report Formats

VII. Department/Division Effort to Collect Data and Assess Outcomes (cognitive and skill areas)
VIII. Across Curriculum Assessments
IX. Graduation Requirements/Transfer Student Issues
X. Full Faculty Review of Core Outcomes and Course Delivery System

The Assessment Committee was asked to react to the assumptions and questions circulated via the first document (Appendix I), in conjunction with the newly stated assumptions and outline of existing and/or proposed assessment approaches provided in this second document (Appendix J).

The minutes of the January 31, 1991 Assessment Committee meeting (Brenau College Assessment Center, 1991) recorded faculty comments and recommendations regarding the outline. In general, committee members supported the approaches suggested in the outline. One member suggested the standardized test of general education (originally proposed for students having experienced only the Brenau core) might be administered to transfer students as well at some point as a measure of comparison with our own "generic" population. It was further recommended that a series of institutional questions be added to the end of the ETS test to obtain student feedback on the effectiveness of the Brenau core curriculum. Questions that explored student satisfaction, perceived weaknesses, excesses, shortcomings etc. were suggested. A quantifiable Likert scale approach was likewise endorsed.

Additional committee feedback addressed the absence of the previously planned Rising Junior writing assessment

and the post-test of reading skill. Discussion recognized administration insistance that such assessment, at least for the present, must be trial run and administered within the department in charge of literacy skill instruction and could not be required by committee vote.

The Committee discussed how to build into the long range plan summative core program evaluation opportunities and agreed that allowance should be made to reconvene the Core Curriculum Review Committee as necessary, should either departmental reviews or Assessment Committee overviews of results suggest a need for changes/adjustments across departmental lines. Such a request would be submitted to the vice president/dean with supporting data. If no such event occurred in four years, the Assessment Committee agreed that the already institutionally "built-in" fifth year disciplinary analysis process would lend itself to summative assessment of the core curricular assessment program.

Formative assessment of the various core areas were also discussed by the Committee. It was recommended that each department with core responsibilites be required to submit a report each spring to the Assessment Committee. Such reports would state any variations in outcomes from previous documents, where and how they were assessed, what results had been obtained reflecting effectiveness of the program, and what use had been made (or was planned) of the year's data to improve the program if warranted.

Further discussion addressed the assessment of critical thinking and values outcomes across the curriculum. It was committee concensus that both sets of outcomes needed to be slowly built into existing required courses, reflected on the syllabi, and assessed therein. No committee decision was offered, however, regarding the measurement of growth or "value-added" in the critical thinking or value outcome areas overall.

The committee commented on computer competency, global world view, and geography, the three competency areas not covered within required core coursework. Although elective coursework addressed these competencies, it appeared to many faculty to be additional "hidden core" in an already heavy (eighty quarter credit hours) core curriculum. Particularly for global world view outcomes, it was suggested that various options eventually be explored for assessing student attainment of the desired outcomes, including, for example, study abroad experience.

A final concern of the committee in its review of the proposed long range plan elements dealt with the inequity of requirements placed on "generic" students compared to transfers, especially junior college transfers who were accepted with a fifty-five hour core substituting for the Brenau eighty hour core. It was suggested that this issue be further studied, and that the idea of a sticker or other designation on the diploma of students completing the full Brenau competency-oriented core be considered.

Following the January 31, 1991 Assessment Committee meeting, a final version of a plan for core curricular assessment at Brenau was developed as described in detail below. (See Appendix K.) Incorporated into the plan were many of the Committee recommendations wherever feasible, taking into consideration administrative guidelines from the vice president for academic affairs as well as SACS criteria for institutional effectiveness, Brenau's mission, a concern for quality, Brenau's population, the institution's fiscal and human resources, and sound educational theory and practice.

Development of the Final Four-Part Plan for Core Assessment

The final Brenau Women's College Core Curricular Assessment Plan (Appendix K) contained four primary parts:

I. A statement of goal.
II. Nine assumptions.
III. A rationale for and list of eight major plan elements.
IV. A plan for evaluation of the Core Assessment plan.

A description of the four parts and their development follows.

I. Statement of Goal

The first part of the final Brenau Women's College Core Curricular Assessment Plan (see Appendix K) was a statement of goal. Just as Ewell (1985) described student outcomes assessment as one aspect of an accountability system, the goal statement identified the Brenau core assessment plan as a part of the larger planning and

evaluation model (see Appendix L) of the College, and recognized its relationship to the purpose and mission of Brenau.

II. Assumptions

The second part of the Core Curricular Assessment Plan contained nine assumptions. These assumption statements allowed for the philosophical intentions of the Brenau faculty Assessment Committee, as previously outlined, to be stated as premises for the successful implementation of the plan elements. This included the assumption that the appropriateness of all plan elements and the core outcomes themselves would be reviewed periodically (Assumption A); that assessment would not have a gate-keeping function at Brenau except in as much as individual outcomes in a course are built into the course evaluation procedures and grades (Assumption C); that data gathering efforts (testing) would contribute to the teaching/learning experience, not interfere with it (Assumption E); that assessment requires commitment from the administration philosophically as well as in terms of necessary resources (Assumptions F and I); and that the instructional process is faculty owned and must not be dictated by assessment efforts (Assumption G).

The assumption section also acknowledged basic tenets discovered in the literature review on assessment in general as well as specific case studies of successful assessment efforts. These included: in Assumptions B and C the concept of determining the appropriate focus of

assessment at the institution, as cited by Banta (1988), Davis (1989), and Terenzini (1989b); the belief cited by Ewell (1985a) that successful and meaningful assessment requires the personal identification and genuine commitment of the college administration (Assumption F); the concept of faculty participation in curricular design and assessment of outcomes (Assumption G) cited by SACS (1989-1990) among others; recognition in Assumption H of the importance of coordinating the assessment effort with the regular evaluation, planning, and budgeting cycles of the college and especially the office of the chief academic officer (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988); and finally the concept elaborated on by McClain, Krueger and Kangas (1989) that certain costs must be expected to accompany assessment, both direct outlays and indirect costs in terms of faculty and staff time and energies (Assumption I).

Assumptions addressed as well certain Brenau administration guidelines gleaned from interviews and review of the Assessment Committee minutes. Included was the expectation that departments would contribute to the data collection needs of the assessment effort regarding individual students, portfolio contributions, etc., and would be responsible for developing means of assessing the knowledge and skill outcomes within their core coursework (Assumptions B and D). Assumption D further anticipated departmental plans for the use of the results of assessment to improve the curriculum or revise their outcomes.

Finally, administration guidelines were reflected in the assumption that core course syllabi would be standardized and contain appropriate outcome statements, with those outcomes addressed and assessed across the various sections and instructors of a given core course.

Lastly, Southern Association accreditation criteria were reflected in the assumptions of the Brenau Women's College Core Curricular Assessment Plan. SACS (1989-1990) guidelines on the use of a variety of techniques to assess was suggested in Assumption B; broad faculty and administrative involvement was suggested in Assumptions F and G.

III. Rationale and Plan Elements

A statement of rationale prefaced the next section of the plan which would describe the actual assessment efforts anticipated. The rationale was as follows:

> In general, the Brenau Women's College core curricular assessment approaches were selected based upon the availability of pre-existing data sources supported by the literature review of current practice and experience at other colleges, piloted efforts at Brenau, review of SACS institutional effectiveness criteria and interviews with SACS personnel, interviews with Brenau College administrators, analysis of available standardized tests of general education, budget, personnel and time restraints at Brenau College. An attempt was made to utilize varying types of assessment ranging from nationally normed tests to student self assessments, all within the means of the College. Continual adjustments to the plan are anticipated as data and ongoing evaluation suggest the value or lack of value in the various approaches tried.

The core assessment plan elements listed in Section III were divided into eight categories as follows:

1. Overall Assessment of the Core Efforts
2. Value-Added, Pre-Post Assessments
3. Across the Curriculum Competency Assessments
4. Out-of-class Competency Assessments
5. Database and Data Reporting Formats
6. Cohort Tracking over Time
7. Departmental Reports on Core Effectiveness Assessments and Use of Results
8. Annual Assessment Committee/Assessment Center Evaluation of Reports and Results, and Report/Recommendations to Dean and Faculty

The eight categories basically reflected those devised for the draft plan described earlier, and were designed to give organization to the different aspects of assessment included. The content of each category is described more fully below.

Overall Assessment of the Core Efforts. Four different approaches were utilized to address overall assessment in the Brenau Women's College Core Curriculum. They were the ETS Academic Profile, a locally developed questionnaire of self-reported gain in core outcomes, a portfolio tracking of core results, and, lastly, portfolio review interviews. Each of the approaches is described below.

The ETS Academic Profile (short version) was selected as a means of incorporating a nationally normed measure of general education into the assessment plan. Such a standardized means of comparing Brenau's population with other institutions, at least initially to obtain some baseline data, seemed advisable as one element of the

institution's assessment plan, based on the literature review of current practice and interviews with representative colleges. Though not required by SACS (1989-1990), this approach is mentioned in the criteria as an option and is widely used at other institutions as an indicator. The ETS test was selected after studying the offerings of both the Educational Testing Service and American College Testing program, due to the forty minute, short testing time and the availabilty of both norm and criteria referenced scores on measures relevant to the faculty-determined Brenau core curricular outcomes. (See Appendix M.) Since the literature strongly suggested sampling in assessment (Ewell, 1985a; Larson, 1990; Sites, 1990) and the purchase of tests was expensive, a two year cycle was determined to test every other entering class as fall freshmen and again as spring sophomores and spring seniors.

To evaluate the overall core strictly from the student's perspective, a questionnaire was developed locally via the Assessment Committee to measure a student's perceived development in the core outcomes and her views on the importance of a liberal general education. This approach was suggested by Sites (1990) among others. Likert scale responses were selected for easier compilation and graphing, and comparison year to year. It was anticipated the questionnaire would be administered in conjunction with spring testing of sophomores and seniors.

Portfolio tracking of core results was the third vehicle for overall core assessment. This approach was highly endorsed in the current literature as the most promising new approach to core assessment (Forrest, 1990; Paskow, 1990) and was strongly supported by the academic administration of Brenau (Sullivan, 1990). All faculty teaching core courses would be expected to contribute documentation of outcome attainment to the portfolios starting with the class entering as freshmen in 1990 and classes thereafter. Ongoing reevaluation of the process was anticipated. The standard syllabus containing statements of expected core outcomes would form the foundation of the portfolio.

The final element of the overall core assessment effort involved portfolio-review interviews as a means of reviewing the contents of sample portfolios, the progress of random students in the core, and ultimately the effectiveness of the core. The interviews were also expected to suggest which assessment processes seemed to be providing the most useful information, thus providing an element of plan evaluation as well. The opportunity for direct faculty/student interaction vis a vis the core and the opportunity to encourage and obtain student feedback on a series of carefully prepared questions was deemed valuable, as suggested by the Carson-Newman experience (Osborne, 1990) and a means of making maximum use of the portfolios. Furthermore, the focus-type interview was one

of the assessment approaches suggested by SACS (1989-1990) in its preference for a broad based and faculty involved planning and evaluation process at an institution.

Value-Added, Pre-Post Assessments. Value-added, pre-post skill assessments constituted the second section of the assessment implementation plan. SACS criteria were very explicit that "completion requirements for an associate or baccalaureate degree must include competence in reading, writing, oral communications and fundamental mathematical skills" (SACS, 1989-1990: 17). To demonstrate the influence of the curriculum in promoting these skills, pre-post testing was a viable option already used to some degree in developmental math, college algebra, developmental English, and across the required English sequence to evaluate writing and reading skills and to some extent speaking skills. The involvement of the teaching faculty in administering the pre- and post-tests, evaluating the results, and using the results to improve the instructional process was anticipated and supported by the literature (Astin, 1987). In addition to the pre-post assessments in math and English skills, the Brenau plan recommended repeated administrations of both a locally developed questionnaire on predisposition to think critically as well as the Watson-Glaser standardized test of critical thinking. The testing schedule proposed for the Academic Profile test would be used for the Watson Glaser, with alternate year classes.

Across the Curriculum Competency/Assessments. Across the curriculum competency assessments were considered in the next portion of the implemention plan. Primarily this area concerned the assessment of critical thinking outcomes and values outcomes which were not course specific as were the majority of the other skill and knowledge outcomes of the core Taxonomy (see Appendix A). Without specific course identities, these clusters of faculty approved outcomes required some identified means of measuring a student's or a class's development following exposure to the Brenau core curriculum or the overall Brenau experience. The Alverno and the Clayton State (Paskow, 1990) assessment models among many others recognized these outcomes as among the most important to consider when measuring the impact of college. Therefore the Brenau plan indicated a need to distribute the outcomes across the core curriculum, have them specified on relevant core syllabi, and have teaching faculty assess the assigned critical thinking or values outcome and supply portfolio documentation of same.

Out-of-Class Competency Assessments. The fourth section of the implementation plan addressed the out-of-class assessment of certain competencies included in the outcomes approved by the Brenau faculty but not tied to specific required coursework. Unlike the critical thinking and values outcomes, the geography, cross cultural awareness and computer competency outcomes were considered

reasonably self-contained and quite possibly acquired by students prior to matriculation at Brenau. Therefore elective support courses were included in the schedule but it was deemed important to offer students a means of "testing out" and demonstrating competency without taking additional coursework. This was a concern of the Assessment Committee faculty who recognized the importance of the outcomes yet felt the support coursework represented "hidden core" (Brenau College Assessment Center, January 31, 1991). Therefore, it was determined that self study materials on geography and cross cultural awareness outcomes (part of Global World View outcomes) as well as computer competency outcomes would be provided in the College library, and testing dates would be set at least once a year to provide students the opportunity to self-study for and/or demonstrate these competencies without taking a course. This approach provided two means of compliance with the SACS criteria stating that an "institution must define its expected educational results and describe how the achievement of these results will be ascertained" (SACS, 1989-1990: 14) as well as the requirement that a core curriculum "should provide means by which students may acquire basic competencies in the use of computers" (SACs, 1989-1990: 18).

Database and Data Reporting Formats. Database development and data reporting formats were combined to constitute the fifth section of the Brenau Women's College

Core Curriculum Plan implementation. It was determined that each entering student should have basic demographic and biographic information contained in an assessment database to which math and English placement test scores and other data could be added longitudinally. Much data were already "available" at Brenau but needed to be cataloged and drawn into suitable format as suggested by Nichols (1989: 92). It was recognized that ideally this effort should be coordinated with the master student database in the Registrar's office to avoid duplication of data entry while still adding to Brenau's database capabilities. Appropriate coordination would allow importation of mutually useful and available data including core course grades, SAT scores and the like. Additional reporting forms were recommended for development to track individuals and cohorts in the overall core (coursetaking patterns and grades) as well as, for example, in math and English testing and progress through the core sequences.

Cohort Tracking Over Time. Cohort tracking over time was the next part of the core assessment implementation effort although it in many instances overlapped other plan elements. Basically this part of the plan called attention to the fact that certain data collected to evaluate one student or one cohort at one point in time had additional value as part of a longitudinal study to compare a given student's progress at two or more points in time, or a class's development at different points in a typical four

year program of study, or finally to compare one class or cohort with others that came before or followed. Clearly this approach contributed to satisfaction of the SACS criteria for the establishment of procedures to "ascertain periodically the change in the academic achievement of their students" (SACS, 1989-1990: 14). As supported by the literature (Nichols, 1989; Endo and Biltner, 1985, McClain, Krueger and Kangas, 1989) cohort tracking in conjuction with database management (see database section above) makes meaningful use of data which have generally been collected all along, and could contribute to analysis of program and institutional effectiveness. The plan recommended cohort tracking in the following areas: English placement test results (including subscores); math placement test results; ETS Academic Profile total scores and subscores on test groups (only total scores on individuals); a spreadsheet and graphing of student responses to the locally developed questionaire on core growth; responses to a locally developed student questionnaire on predisposition to think critically piloted in ACT I; scores on the Watson Glaser critical thinking instrument.

Departmental Reports on Core Effectiveness Assessments and Use of Results. In order to track asessments of the core knowledge and skill outcomes primarily occuring in specific departmental coursework, the seventh element of the plan required annual departmental reports on core effectiveness assessments and

use of those results. Faculty teaching in the core would provide their department chairman with quarterly reports describing how (with what instruments/means) they had assessed their core course outcomes, what they had sent to the assessment center for inclusion in the student portfolios, what the results suggested vis a vis outcome acquisition overall, and what changes/improvements they intended or recommended based on those results to improve the teaching/learning experience. In turn, department chairs would be asked to submit an annual assessment report to the vice president for academic affairs in conjunction with their traditional annual report each May. This evaluation procedure responded to both SACS criteria (SACS, 1989-1990) and sound educational practice as well as assessment literature recommendations that the assessment process be tied directly to the normal institutional planning and evaluation process (Kinnick, 1985).

Annual Evaluation of Reports and Results. Step eight of the implementation plan assured maximum use of the reports in step seven. Following review of the departmental reports by the Assessment Committee and the Assessment Office which would compile the responses across the core, a report would be prepared for presentation to the dean and the faculty each fall. Included in the report to the dean would be recommendations for change as appropriate.

IV. Plan for Evaluation of the Core Assessment Plan

A brief review of evaluation literature was undertaken along with a review of the current practices in assessment already investigated in order to develop the final segment for Brenau Women's College Core Curricular Assessment Plan: a plan for evaluating the plan itself, once implemented. Who should be involved in the evaluation as well as what criteria would be used were both considered and addressed.

Fitz-Gibbon and Morris (1987: 10) have stated that the task of an evaluator "is to find the design that provides the most credible information in the situation you have at hand." Morris, Fitz-Gibbon, and Lindheim (1987:8) claim that evaluations often fall short of producing totally clear information on the worth of programs or their components, yet "the task of any one evaluator is to provide the best information possible. This means gathering the most highly credible information allowable within the constraints of your situation . . ."

King (1987:9) asserted that "An important function of most evaluations is answering the question, Does the combination of materials, activities, and administrative arrangements that constitute this program seem to lead to the achievement of its objectives?" An evaluation of Brenau's core curricular assessment plan would have to ultimately determine whether the information Brenau needs to assess its core curriculum effectiveness is indeed being

gathered and reported in usable form. Any gaps in needed information should become clear by evaluating the plan itself. Likewise, evaluation of the plan should, over time, lead to elimination of procedures which do not provide useful, meaningful and/or cost effective feedback on program effectiveness. As King (1987:9) affirmed, the evaluation should indicate "what worked" and should "identify strengths or suggest appropriate changes." The Brenau plan for assessment should provide the means to evaluate the core program; the evaluation of the plan itself should help determine how effectively Brenau is doing the job of core evaluation.

The literature on assessment previously summarized offered various descriptions of assessment plan evaluations which had led to changes in an institution's approach to assessment. Miller (1989) noted Virginia's change of direction with regard to standardized testing after results were evaluated and found to be difficult to feed back into curriculum reform. Portfolios originally designed for use in advising were abandonned by Roanoke for that purpose when it was discovered the process was too cumbersome and expensive for the institution to manage at that level; instead, sampling was instituted (Millinger, 1990). Finally, Winstead (1991) reiterated the common warning in the literature that "you cannot assess everything but must decide what to assess and assess it well." He added an institution may "wish to add or delete areas as you

evaluate your assessment experiences over time" (Winstead, 1991).

Therefore, as recommended by the Assessment Committee, the first aspect of evaluation of the assessment plan for Brenau's core was determined to be via the annual formative reviews of the department chairmen (based on individual faculty reports) to the dean of Brenau with recommendations for changes as warranted. The departmental reports would be scrutinized for faculty and departmental feedback on what assessment processes were or were not working from the faculty's perspective. In particular, faculty support for and involvement in the portfolio project would be studied, and an attempt made to find evidence of involvement with the cross-curricular outcomes in critical thinking and values. This annual formative review would be accomplished by the director of assessment and summarized into a report to the Assessment Committee and the dean.

A second formative aspect of plan evaluation would involve Assessment Committee conclusions from the annual portfolio review interviews. These interviews would require a well designed set of questions to obtain feedback from students as to their effort and sense of confidence with the ETS Academic Profile standardized test, their opinion of the portfolio effort and its benefits, and their general sense of the Brenau general education program. The interviews likewise would allow faculty to review portfolios and begin to determine their value in describing

the outcomes of the Brenau core. Reactions and recommendations of the faculty following the interviews and reviews would be transcribed and compiled and should provide significant formative evaluation of major portions of the assessment plan.

In addition, the faculty of the math and English divisions, the Assessment Committee and the Academic Vice President/Dean would be asked to annually review the results of the core questionnaire, the pre-post skill assessments and related database reports, the out-of-class competency assessment efforts, the ETS Academic Profile results and the Watson Glaser critical thinking test results to determine the value (or usefulness of results) each perceived in these assessment efforts to date, and to observe any evidence of trends or value-added information. The reactions of each party would be transcribed and compiled for addition to the Assessment Center's annual formative evaluation files on the assessment plan, and eventual fall report to the faculty at faculty retreat.

Summative evaluation of the core assessment plan would be integrated into the five year disciplinary analysis process within Brenau's normal planning and evaluation cycle. Every tenth year the cycle would involve core curricular assessment plan evaluation as part of the Southern Association (SACS) reaffirmation accreditation review. These five and ten year reviews should involve student surveys, faculty surveys, administrator surveys and

an outside evaluator/consultant opinion as recommended highly by the Roanoke experience and their use of the Program Evaluation Panel (Larson,1990). The SACS reaffirmation committee could serve as the outside evaluator every tenth year. In any case, the summative evaluation of the core curriculum assessment plan would lead to recommendations for improvement and change which would be forwarded to the academic vice president and dean of Brenau for consideration and final action.

Assessment Committee Reactions to Final Plan

The minutes of the April 23, 1991 Assessment Committee meeting (Brenau college Assessment Center, 1991) revealed committee reactions to the final plan as outlined above. The goal and assumptions were generally accepted as stated, although the question was raised whether a focus on program assessment meant the abandonment of individual student outcomes so arduously developed over five years. Faculty were assured that was not the case, but rather the majority were course-embedded, course-specific outcomes and were required to be listed on all core syllabi, and their appropriate assessment was entrusted to the course instructor. Course grades were thus expected to reasonably reflect outcome acquisition.

One primary concern that resurfaced in the committee's review of the final plan dealt with the need to identify and compensate someone to develop the assessment-related database and to assure administrative support and

encouragement for that herculean effort. With respect to the assessment of values outcomes, student exit surveys of self-reported gains were endorsed. Specifically regarding the community service value outcome, a survey such as Brenau's president had utilized to canvas faculty was recommended for use with students, with longitudinal tracking. Related to this matter, the committee noted that resources needed to be provided for test and survey development, and for compensating faculty teaching one-hour core support coursework (such as in geography, cross-cultural awareness, introduction to critical thinking, and values clarification) when such teaching is an overload.

On the subject of portfolios several committee members suggested the project eventually be extended into the majors with students, rather than the assessment center, maintaining them. These portfolios were envisioned as teaching tools in and of themselves.

The plan to administer the ETS Academic Profile during freshman orientation week fall quarter raised the issue of who was in charge of scheduling the various testing efforts emanating from distinct departments and offices that week. It was recommended that a coordinated effort was needed to avoid overtesting and repetition of efforts, and to assure each division was aware of another's efforts. Particularly the committee recommended the need for alignment of the assessment and institutional research endeavors on campus.

The chair of the Assessment Committee agreed to forward the committee's stated concerns to the Vice President for Academic Affairs along with the Core Assessment Plan. It was agreed that the suggestions and recommendations would be given further consideration in the ongoing evaluation of core assessment at Brenau.

SACS Reaffirmation Committee Member's Reaction to Plan

As one additional means of formative evaluation of the proposed core curricular assessment plan (Appendix K) , a copy was submitted to the SACS visiting committee during the April 1991 reaffirmation visit to Brenau. In particular the coordinator of institutional planning and research at Furman University, who was assigned the institutional effectiveness aspects of the SACS review, was asked to react to the plan and offer suggestions for improvement. In his letter following the site visit, Winstead (1991) stated that Brenau's core curricular assessment plan was "as thorough and complete" as any he had seen. He felt the assumptions in Section II dealt "with most of the possible pitfalls that I constantly worry about" (Winstead, 1991). A final concern was that the assessment program should contribute positively to the academic program and should not become an end in itself. He stated "In any program of assessment there lurks the real danger that assessment will take on a life of its own and thereby undermine the very outcomes that it is intended to measure" (Winstead, 1991).

Winstead (1991) further stated he was pleased that the Brenau plan assured

> that adequate flexibility be built into the model to insure that departments and individual faculty have the freedom to make modifications in the model to better suit their individual areas as long as the overall model is not compromised (Winstead, 1991).

Winstead (1991) likewise endorsed Brenau's "focus on movements and trends over time, not absolute reference points." He expressed his preference for stressing the assessment of the whole core, keeping the "assessment at the program and cohort level, and not being punitive in any way to individuals as a result of the overall assessment effort" (Winstead, 1991).

Winstead (1991) felt strongly "about finding appropriate ways to measure values, as difficult as this turns out to be." He recommended Brenau "continue in all the areas outlined," though he suggested Brenau "may wish to add or delete areas as you evaluate your assessment experiences over time" (Winstead, 1991). Winstead's (1991) final advice was

> to make sure that the Assessment Center remains the coordinator and facilitator of the assessment program and not "the assessor". Ultimate success will depend on developing joint ownership, widespread involvement, and the realization that assessment can produce benefits beyond those associated with just satisfying the requirements of an external agency.

Like the Assessment Committee's formative evaluation of the final plan, these comments were noted as important to ongoing evolution of the Brenau Core Assessment Plan.

Report of Reaffirmation Committee Relative to Core Assessment

A draft copy of the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee from the Southern Association (SACS, 1991) also contained statements relative to core curricular assessment at Brenau. These comments afforded additional formative assessment of the Brenau Women's College Core Curricular Outcomes Assessment Plan.

Under the institutional research section, the SACS committee suggested that

> agreement be reached on the additional databases needed for supporting appropriate institutional research activities at Brenau; and (2) that an on-going institutional research agenda be developed and agreed upon to support the overall evaluation, assessment, planning, and decision-making needs (SACS, 1991: 10).

This had been a concern of the Assessment Committee as previously cited. The SACS draft report also contained an important suggestion regarding assessment and faculty development. Specifically, the Committee suggested that

> teacher training seminars conducted by a speech specialist be held for every person teaching in the freshman English core and that all courses be planned with speech instruction components as well as simply opportunities for speaking (SACS, 1991: 16).

This suggestion supported across the curriculum assessment of the Brenau core speech outcomes.

The most conclusive statements from the SACS visiting committee regarding the core assessment plan were found in the Institutional Effectiveness and the Planning and Evaluation sections. Under Section III, Institutional Effectiveness, the committee commended Brenau for "its

efforts to implement assessment procedures (e.g. establishment of an Assessment Committee, Assessment Office, and a formal assessment plan for the core curriculum) . . ." (SACS, 1991: 6). Under planning and evaluation the committee's report stated

> The assessment effort at Brenau is impressive as regards the presence of a formal assessment plan for the core curriculum, the number of instruments and methodologies used, and the variety of activities under way (SACS, 1991:9).

This confirmation by SACS (1991) of Brenau's chosen direction in core curricular assessment along with the related suggestions and recommendations were compiled in conjunction with the other formative evaluations of the Core Assessment Plan previously described, and all were shared with both the vice president for academic affairs and the Assessment Committee faculty for consideration and future action.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of Results

In preparation for the development of a Brenau core curricular outcomes assessment plan, a thorough review of the assessment literature on several different levels provided an important background against which to compare Brenau's situation. First it was helpful to study the origins and philosohpical underpinnings of the assessment movement which emerged and blossomed during the decade of the 1980s. Specifically, a review of the national reports like A Nation at Risk (National Commission, 1983) or Involvement in Learning (Study Group, 1984) and the AAC report Integrity in the College Curriculum (Project, 1985) led to an understanding that a comprehensive approach to accountability was being demanded to dispel public perception of irresponsibility in higher education. It was recommended by the AAC report (Project, 1985) that to help remedy the problem, student assessments and program evaluation should be a continuous process. This background research made greater sense out of the subsequent federal guidelines (Federal Register, 1987) and regional accrediting agency criteria (SACS, 1989-1990) on institutional effectiveness which have emerged and which have had such a tremendous impact upon institutions of higher education.

Further review of the literature revealed considerable variation in the use of key assessment terminology which could potentially be confusing in the development of an assessment plan. It was discovered that the words "assessment", "outcomes", "accountability" and "institutional effectiveness" generally became clarified when the purpose and intended level of assessment were also clarified. It became obvious that it was critically important to determine whether one wished to assess for gatekeeping purposes, to enhance the teaching/learning experience, and/or for accountability to some external body. Likewise, it was vitally important to state the level of assessment intended with the use of a given instrument or methodology. Levels of assessment could range from the individual student to a particular educational program to whole institutions. Clarification of these terms, purposes and levels in assessment proved to be important in the development of Brenau's core curricular assessment plan in order to give focus to the effort and to establish institutional priorities in assessment.

The review of the literature provided other important clarifications for the term "institutional effectiveness" which were of significance to Brenau as well. Strong support was evidenced (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988) for the notion that institutional effectiveness was a term that must be identified in an institutional context, taking into consideration a college's unique mission, goals, students

and traditions. It was recognized that student outcomes assessment was only one aspect of institutional effectiveness, but a primary one given the fact that the principle goal of most colleges is student learning. Yet given the variation in institutions nationwide it was clear that no single approach to assessment of student outcomes was appropriate for everyone.

Taking into consideration that accreditation requirements were one of the strongest motivators to assessment recognized in the literature, a detailed investigation of the institutional effectiveness criteria of the Southern Association (SACS, 1989-1990) revealed what would be the principle guidelines to assessment for Brenau College. At the same time, however, authors like Folger and Harris (1989) urged institutions developing assessment programs in order to meet SACS criteria to simultaneously consider what assessment approaches served their own needs for information as well. The SACS (1989-1990) criteria very notably did not specify assessment formats but rather broadly required institutions to define expected educational results consistent with institutional purpose, to describe how the achievement of those results would be ascertained, and, further, to use the results in a broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation process.

Since Brenau's Core Curriculum Review Committee and faculty had already reviewed the purpose and established core curricular outcomes, in order to meet SACS requirements

the plan under development would need to describe a reasonable plan to measure the outcomes and follow through with evaluation as part of the overall institutional planning process. Certain specific skills like reading, writing, oral communication, math and computer skills were required by SACS to be measured as part of an assessment plan, but any of a variety of means were identified as acceptable, and sampling was frequently encouraged (Larson, 1990; Sites, 1990).

Having determined the SACS criteria impacting a core curricular assessment plan, specific means of potentially meeting the required criteria were studied via the literature on current practice (Paskow, 1990; Curry and Hager, 1987; Paulson, 1990; Forrest, 1990; Ewell and Lisensky, 1988) and via direct telephone interviews with practitioners. The diversity of approaches and combinations of approaches to core assessment was particularly noticeable, although all were apparently considered within the range of acceptable. With respect to overall program assessment, standardized tests such as the ETS Academic Profile and the ACT COMP had been widely used, though not without criticism and controversy over their true usefulness and meaning (Vanderment, 1987). Some concensus was nevertheless apparent that the tests served a purpose in establishing baseline data for longitudinal comparisons and national norming, providing some idea of how well an institution's program addressed both commonly accepted

content and commonly accepted levels of collegiate education (Sigsbee, 1990; Rice, 1990). However, the literature confirmed that a standardized test of general education alone was not considered sufficient to establish institutional effectiveness, and, further, its results should be considered cautiously and in conjunction with other measures of program effectiveness (Banta and Moffett, 1987; Curry and Hager, 1987).

The use of portfolios to assess core curricular program outcomes was widely evidenced in the recent literature and was an apparent response to dissatisfaction with overdependence on standardized measures of general education outcomes (Forrest, 1990; Paskow, 1990). Portfolios appeared to be especially attractive as they could build on existing assessment activity, use various techniques simultaneously, and be potentially cost effective as well.

Advice gleaned from a review of the work of Ewell and Lisensky (1988) had particular applicability to the development of a core curricular assessment plan at Brenau. These authors described their work with ten small, private liberal arts colleges, many struggling with some of the same restraints as Brenau in terms of enrollment and finances. Among their recommendations for successful assessment was to find and emphasize areas of true distinctiveness and focus on mission, working with information already at hand or readily available. An interview with Larson (1990) at Roanoke College reinforced this idea, adding the

recommendation that the process not be made unduly complicated and sampling always be considered.

The interviews conducted directly with five institutions in the Southern Association accrediting region appeared to be representative of the assessment approaches discovered already in the literature (Larson, 1990; Rice, 1990; Millinger, 1990; Wilson, 1990; Sigsbee, 1990; Osborne, 1990). A wide range of sophistication and evolution in the assessment programs was observed from the Clayton State model (Rice, 1990) which was highly developed and very involved, to the simpler, mostly qualitative, and fairly recently evolving approach at small, private, Carson-Newman (Osborne, 1990). The use of portfolios and standardized tests in particular varied across the five institutions, largely influenced by the availability of resources and/or state requirements.

The next step undertaken in the core assessment plan development involved interviewing the president and vice president of Brenau College to determine the local administrative point of view on core assessment which would of necessity guide long range planning. The president expressed a distaste for standardized tests, and a preference for greater emphasis on classroom assessment (Burd, 1990). The vice president saw portfolios as the cornerstone of a Brenau plan, but not to the exclusion of other measures, including a standardized test to raise general curricular issues (Sullivan, 1990).

Since the assessment literature previously cited suggested the value of inventorying and using ongoing assessment efforts across campus, a review of the minutes of the Brenau Assessment Committee was undertaken to document occurring or projected assessment efforts. By the end of the 1989-1990 academic year it appeared that much had been suggested to assess the faculty approved outcomes of the core, but few concrete measures had been agreed upon outside of the course-specific knowledge and skill areas of the core. Portfolios were agreed upon as a measure of the core but the contents of the portfolios were not described. Portfolio review interviews were suggested as a means of analyzing the results of the portfolios eventually, but no further details were available. Finally, how to include measures of the non-course-specific outcomes like critical thinking and values was debated but not finalized. It was clear that some direction would have to be provided for in the plan under development.

The assistance of the department chairs was solicited to compile evidence of ongoing assessment of the faculty developed and approved core outcomes within the departments and specific courses designed to deliver them. (See Appendix H.) It was discovered that no real summative evaluation of any of the thirteen core outcome areas, nor of the entire core program itself, was taking place. Since SACS requirements indicated the necessity of not only defining expected educational results and describing how

achievement of results would be ascertained, but also using the results in a broadbased continuous planning process, it was apparent that a core curricular assessment plan for Brenau would have to address use of results in the various ongoing efforts as well as addressing the absense of concrete assessment of non-course-specific outcomes and the need for summative assessment of the overall core. Clearly, coordination of the existing efforts into a comprehensive plan with reporting elements tied into the annual academic calendar of budgeting and evaluation would be necessary.

Having researched the literature in general, conducted interviews outside and within the College, and with an understanding of ongoing core assessment at Brenau established, an exploratory document (Appendix I) was drafted stating some of the basic assumptions discovered in the assessment literature and interviews and delineating the pending questions found in the Committee minutes over a year and a half. The Assessment Committee, it was believed, should initiate plan development with these assumptions and questions in mind and copies of the draft document were therefore circulated among committee members. A second document (Appendix J) was subsequently drafted, again stating assumptions and attempting to outline the ongoing core assessment efforts at Brenau as well as incorporating elements discussed and approved in committee. Included was the ETS Academic Profile standardized test of general education. The arguments in the literature and/or stated by

practitioners in the field (Sigsbee, 1990; Rice, 1990; Curry and Hager, 1987; Banta and Moffett, 1987) in conjunction with the SACS (1989-1990) criteria seemed to suggest that a nationally normed standardized test was an important inclusion for Brenau at this time.

The Assessment Committee was asked to react to both draft documents and to make recommendations and suggestions for change that might be incorporated into a final document, the Brenau Women's College Core Curricular Assessment Plan. Most significantly, committee members recommended the addition of a locally constructed questionnaire to be administered in conjunction with the Academic Profile standardized test, to measure students' self-perceived gains in the core outcomes. In addition, the committee endorsed the idea of yearly core assessment reports by department chairs to the academic vice president as a means of formative evaluation of the core assessment effort. Further, they suggested summative program evaluation could be achieved via the every fifth year institutional disciplinary analysis process and the every tenth year SACS reaffirmation visit. Finally, the Assessment Committee faculty recommended both critical thinking and values outcomes be slowly built into existing required coursework across the core curriculum and be assessed therein.

A final version of the Brenau Women's College Core Curricular Assessment Plan was prepared based on the feedback from the draft documents and as outlined in

Appendix K. A Statement of Goal introduced the document and was designed to identify the core plan as part of the larger planning/evaluation and institutional effectiveness models of the College, all intended to contribute to achievement of the stated mission and purpose of Brenau.

The Assumptions section of the final document contained nine critical assumptions gleaned from the background literature on assessment, the SACS guidelines, Brenau administration requirements and Brenau faculty input. Each of the assumptions was viewed as vital to successful assessment and effective faculty participation.

A statement of rationale was included as an introduction to the eight categories of actual plan elements, clarifying the sources and foundations for the inclusion of the various approaches selected. A brief discussion of the eight plan assessment elements follows.

The first element of the plan was basically designed to address the need to evaluate the overall core curriculum, not just its individual parts. Four distinct approaches were selected in response to both SACS criteria and the assessment literature in general which recommended institutions not rely solely on standardized test results and that a variety of assessment means be utilized. A standardized test of general education was included to provide baseline data and nationally normed comparisons. However, student self-evaluations of gain, the portfolios strongly endorsed by the Brenau administration, and

portfolio review interviews rounded out the assessment package. This latter was anticipated to result in broad faculty involvement in the process, another stipulation of the SACS (1989-1990) criteria.

The second section of the assessment plan responded to SACS criteria requiring the demonstration of competence in reading, writing, oral communications and fundamental mathematical skills. Value-added, pre-post assessments were described in conjuction with the required Brenau core math and English courses and related placement testing.

The assessment of faculty approved core outcomes in critical thinking and values clarification were considered in the third element of the plan. It was recognized that these outcomes were subtle and difficult to measure but among the primary expected results of a college education. The plan called for distribution of the outcomes across the core curriculum, inclusion of the specified outcomes on relevant core syllabi, and assessment of same by faculty teaching those courses. It was expected that evidence of critical thinking outcome attainment would be placed in a student's portfolio along with other content matter portfolio contributions from that course.

Additional core outcomes not identified with specific required core coursework were addressed in element four of the plan. Specifically, the global world view outcomes, consisting of geography and cross-cultural awareness outcomes, and the computer competency outcomes were

addressed in elective coursework in the core. The plan called for out-of-class test options to demonstrate competency in these areas which might have been obtained independently by the student prior to or after college matriculation. This option recognized the importance of acquiring the outcomes prior to graduation but allowed the student to avoid unnecessary elective coursework if possible.

The development of a database and data reporting formats to support the core curriculum assessment effort constituted the fifth section of the plan. This would allow better use and distribution across the campus of both existing and newly developing data which could potentially contribute to program evaluation and improvement, thus responding as well to accreditation reporting requirements and greater institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

Related to the database development, element six of the plan called for attention to longitudinal studies of classes and students over time. This responded to the SACS requirement that procedures be established to ascertain periodically the change in academic achievement of students (SACS, 1989-1990:14).

Element seven provided a means of coordinating and incorporating into the plan the various assessment efforts undertaken in the required, content/knowledge-based core courses in the various departments. This part required department chairs to report annually to the vice president

for academic affairs on the specific core assessments taking place in the department (as reported quarterly by the teaching faculty) and precisely how the results of the assessments were being used to effect change/improvement. The reports were required to be submitted in conjunction with the traditional annual report to the dean, thus acknowledging the strong recommendations throughout the assessment literature (Kinnick, 1985) that assessment be directly tied to the regular institutional cycles of planning, budgeting and evaluation.

Finally, the last assessment element in the plan involved use of the departmental reports via review by the Assessment Committee and the Assessment Office. An Assessment Office report would compile the departmental responses and make appropriate recommendations for presentation to the dean/vice president as well as to the full faculty at each annual fall faculty retreat.

Section IV of the Brenau Women's College Core Curricular Assessment Plan was developed to provide a means to evaluate the plan itself once it was implemented. Literature (Fitz-Gibbon, Taylor and Morris, 1987; J. Halpern, 1987; King, Morris, and Fitz-Gibbon, 1987) on evaluation was reviewed to guide in developing procedures for this last aspect of the plan, designed to determine how effectively Brenau was doing the job of core assessment. Both formative and summative evaluation was described for the plan.

Formative assessments of plan effectiveness were determined to include the annual reviews of departmental faculty and ultimately chairs, which would be compiled and reported out annually by the Assessment Office. Likewise, the annual Assessment Committee portfolio review interviews and sample portfolio reviews with reactions transcribed and reported would constitute formative assessment of the assessment plan. In addition, formative evaluation would be ongoing via the various evaluation reports required of math and English faculty, the committee review annually of the core questionnaire, Academic Profile results, and the out-of-class competency assessment efforts, etc.

Summative evaluation of the core assessment effort would consist of two main elements, operational at five and ten year intervals. The first phase would make use of the traditional five year discipinary analysis process used at the College, and would include student, faculty, administration and outside evaluator reactions/reviews. This process takes advantage of existing procedures as is highly recommended in the literature (Ewell and Lisensky, 1988; Forrest, 1990) as well as broad participation recommended by successful current practice such as described at Roanoke (1990). Likewise taking advantage of existing processes and available expertise, the second element of the plan to assess the plan would involve the ten year SACS reaffirmation visiting committee as the primary outside evaluators of the core assessment plan's effectiveness to

date. The visiting committee's evaluation would complement the evaluations by students, faculty and administration as part of the self-study process that year.

For purposes of this study, the final plan for core assessment just described was subjected to a final phase of formative evalution via still another review by the Assessment Committee, by the institutional effectiveness specialist of the Brenau SACS reaffirmation visiting committee, and by the full visiting SACS committee. Valuable suggestions were obtained from all three parties.

Essentially, the Assessment Committee felt the database development would require stronger support from the administration and a paid manager. They also endorsed the idea of a values-development survey of students, particularly to chart community service involvement. Finally, the committee highly recommended greater coordination of the assessment and institutional research effort on campus to avoid overlap and enhance communication.

Suggestions obtained from the institutional effectiveness SACS visiting committee member (Winstead, 1991) included the warning that the assessment program should not become an end in itself but should contribute to the academic program. He also recommended that adequate flexibility be maintained in the plan to allow modification as necessary.

The report of the reaffirmation committee of SACS (1991) provided a few additional recommendations on core

assessment. The SACS committee recommended faculty development activity to enhance speech instruction across the required English core coursework. The visiting committee's report (SACS, 1991) also addressed the need for additional databases to support the institutional research efforts of the College and the need to coordinate the institutional research agenda to best support overall evaluation, assessment, planning and decision-making at Brenau. These comments basically echoed similar recommendations by the Brenau faculty Assessment Committee. Most significantly, however, the visiting committee (SACS, 1991) commended Brenau's overall plan and the use of various instruments and methodologies in core assessment.

Conclusions

From the thorough review of of the assessment literature undertaken for this study one may conclude that assessment continues to have at its philosophical base both an aspect of external accountability to the public at large and ideally a certain internal commitment to an improved teaching/learning experience within the institution--that is, both an external and internal focus on quality and improved undergraduate education. However, it also becomes evident from both interviews and the literature on current practice that the major force keeping the assessment movement going is that of either state legislative mandates (in the case of public institutions) or accrediting association guidelines on institutional effectiveness. The

outside forces appear necessary to overcome the natural resistance among most teaching faculty to demonstrate effectiveness by organized data gathering methods. It might be added that the assessment movement does not appear to be a passing fad but rather seems to have become a valued ally of state governments and accrediting agencies alike, as well as of those institutions which have evolved to the point of institutionalizing the assessment process.

The review of the literature on current practice and the direct telephone interviews conducted for this study also led to the conclusion that assessment, and more specifically core curriculum assessment, takes many distinct forms across the various states and campuses studied; there is no one right way to "do it". Definitions of assessment seem to vary according to the purpose of the assessment and the chosen focus on either individual student outcomes or measures of program effectiveness. Both of these foci are evidenced in descriptions of successful current practice. Distinct methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, are preferred in different settings; it would appear that the best rule of thumb is to adapt assessment to the institution's unique mission, purpose and related goals and concerns, considering individual circumstances and resources, while still responding to demands such as those of SACS to provide concrete evidence of the difference made by the curriculum. The means to that end can and should be

varied and can be expected to differ from one institution to another.

Successful assessment efforts, whether in the core curriculum or other elements of the college, face certain predictable pitfalls evidenced in this study, which must be considered in long range plan development. Faculty fears and resentments, student lack of interest and motivation (especially in standardized testing), emotional disagreements on philosophy or focus or methodology, time investments required, and budget restraints can all limit progress. It became apparent in reviewing other programs that top administrative support and leadership are critical elements in successful and truly meaningful assessment. And the leadership's clear commitment to a primary assessment goal of improved student learning would appear to be critical to faculty commitment and active involvement. A commitment of sufficient funds and related release time would also appear to be necessities of a well-led assessment effort if it is to maintain momentum and produce meaningful results. Without these top level commitments the literature and current practice investigated suggest minimal compliance efforts only to meet external demands may result, without accruing the most valuable benefits to the institution in terms of enhanced internal communication, teaching, and learning.

One of the major debates discovered in the current core curriculum assessment literature revolved around the use of

standardized tests of general education. Although portfolios have emerged recently as a popular alternative means of measurement, they lack the advantage of the nationally normed comparability of the standardized test. It may be concluded that there is an advantage to at least periodically using a nationally normed test to determine an institution's relative status on collegiate level general education knowledge and skills. As these tests are improved over time to better match institutional goals, they may become even more relevant in program evaluation.

Portfolios on the other hand, while more adaptable to specific college goals, require careful planning, organization and establishment of means for evaluation. By whom and how will such a broad range of student work be evaluated? As with all new assessment efforts, there are innumerable and always unexpected logistical details requiring attention, not the least of which will be time and money. A newly developed core curricular assessment plan must anticipate these realities while still not being stifled into inaction by them.

The core curriculum assessment plan developed for Brenau College herein responded to the unique situation of Brenau. The goal of bringing attention in the assumptions sections to numerous necessary prerequisites to successful assessment, of providing for a variety of measurement styles, and of focusing on program effectiveness while still measuring individual student outcomes, particularly in the

skills of reading, writing, speaking, computation, and basic computer competency, was accomplished. At the same time the plan incorporated responses to external SACS criteria for data-gathering longitudinally to demonstrate effectiveness, and provided, as also required by SACS, for ongoing revision of the program and the plan, and for use of the results of assessment. It may be concluded from the findings of this study that these elements constitute a fair and reasonable plan for core curricular assessment, a plan which also may be expected to evolve and change over time in response to findings and changing institutional needs, but which will retain as its essencial focus improvement of the general education program at Brenau College.

Implications

The core curriculum assessment plan and the plan to evaluate it developed in this study can be expected to have a positive educational impact at Brenau College in that its focus is largely one of providing an ongoing vehicle for improving the teaching/learning experience at the College. Although strongly motivated by the SACS reaccreditation criteria on institutional effectiveness, the assessment plan also responds to the SACS criteria requiring evidence of the use of the results of assessment to improve practice. It is anticipated that the Brenau core curricular assessment plan developed in this study will lead to the collection of data and information which should help the institution to better understand its clientele and their needs. Such data will

also assist in the development of more effective classroom teaching, enhanced development of cross-curricular skills like critical thinking and effective written and spoken communciation, and ultimately should result in an improved educational product in the form of student learning.

Furthermore, the plan can be expected to evolve and change as results are reviewed and the usefulness of chosen methodologies is analyzed. The review and reporting processes built into the plan should contribute to continuous clarification of institutional goals and thereby ongoing improvement efforts in core curricular programming.

A side benefit that can be expected from implementation of the core curricular assessment plan at Brenau is increased faculty inter-communication on teaching practices and student learning. The responsibility placed on various groups of faculty within different departments to assess results and report them to the department chair, and ultimately the vice president for academic affairs, should lead to more interaction among teaching faculty and ultimately may stimulate meaningful classroom research.

The Brenau Women's College core curricular assessment plan development, while reflecting the unique mission, purposes, goals, and internal restraints of Brenau, can nevertheless reasonably be expected to have broader applicability as a model for core curricular assessment planning elsewhere. Particularly for other private colleges in the Southern Association accreditation region, the

background research on assessment undertaken for this study should be useful as they struggle to interpret and respond to SACS institutional effectiveness criteria and to generally use assessment to improve teaching and general education programming at their institutions.

Recommendations for Implementation, Dissemination and the Improvement of Practice

No developmental study realizes its full potential without implementation and dissemination of the product and use of the myriad lessons learned in the process of development to ultimately improve educational practice. In order for the findings of this study and the core curricular assessment plan developed herein to have maximum opportunity for positive impact at Brenau College, the following recommendations are made:

1. that the administration of Brenau College formally adopt the core curriculum assessment plan as developed, including the review and evaluation processes which will lead to change and improvement in the plan itself over time. The adoption process should include full discussion and endorsement of the goal and assumptions sections of the plan which provide its philosophical underpinnings and are critical to its success.

2. that the plan be disseminated in writing to all faculty of Brenau Women's College. Following distribution of the written plan, arrangements should be made for discussion and explanation of the plan in meetings of the Academic Administrative Staff (department chairs), the

Academic Affairs Committee, a full faculty meeting and subsequently in departmental meetings. At the departmental level, implications for core courses taught through a particular department should be addressed by the Chair of the Assessment Committee aided by the relevant departmental representative to that committee.

3. that Brenau College form an Institutional Effectiveness Overview Committee. It became evident in the course of developing a plan for core curriculum assessment that the need existed for a committee which combined the interests of faculty and classroom assessment, institutional research, student development and administration priorities and restraints. To be successful, assessment efforts require this broader, integrated institutional forum in addition to a faculty assessment committee.

4. that the assessment and institutional research efforts at Brenau be better coordinated, especially with respect to computerized databases and statistical analyses. The core assessment effort as planned will require database management and analysis of results that should impact the whole institution and thus requires a unified approach. Implementation of recommendation four along with reasonable budgetary commitment as suggested in the plan assumptions should assist in realization of this recommendation. .pa

5. that improvement in educational practice would be furthered via the coordination of various faculty development opportunities to support the new core curricular

assessment plan. In particular, it is recommended that faculty workshops be organized to suggest techniques for effective teaching and assessment of speaking, writing, reading, and critical thinking skills across the core curriculum and perhaps even across majors. In addition, faculty workshops on conducting core course or discipline-specific classroom research/assessments are recommended.

6. that, based on the survey of current practice in core curriculum assessment undertaken for this study, Brenau College consider within a reasonable period of time a reorganization of its lengthy list of core curricular outcomes into a shorter, more succinct and manageable description of general education goals. In general it was observed in this research that the most "workable" programs identified knowledge or content "perspectives" as goals of the general education program without making the details of that content area a part of the core outcome statements as is currently the case at Brenau. Instead, the collegiate level skills of reading, writing, speaking, thinking and valuing were most often the foci of assessments across the core and often into the majors. Since Brenau's Taxonomy of Outcomes already contains these latter goals as well, it is recommended that a reorganization and restatement of core outcomes be considered to place greater focus on the assessment of these collegiate skills within the context of the knowledge areas outlined in the faculty approved Taxonomy.

7. that this study and its findings be disseminated to the Southern Association accrediting agency (SACS). This would provide the opportunity for further feedback from SACS, as well as for sharing the model, if and where appropriate, with other institutions similar to Brenau in the Southern Association accrediting region.

8. that dissemination of the findings of this study in topical papers be submitted to regional and national forums on assessment. The results of this study could be summarized for submission to the AAHE Annual Assessment Forum among other relevant professional groups potentially interested in current practice in core curricular assessment and institutional research nationally.

Final Conclusion

This study sought to develop for Brenau College a core curricular assessment plan with a structure and content suited to the particular nature and constraints of that institution. It likewise sought to carefully incorporate into the plan a suitable means for ongoing evaluation of the plan itself once implemented.

The final product of this study, the Brenau Women's College Core Curriculum Assessment Plan, is one that is multifaceted and broadly integrated throughout the college, involving all department chairs and core teaching faculty as well as the Assessment Center Director and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Further, the plan anticipates faculty development efforts and eventual

involvement across the majors in some cases. Incorporated into the plan were annual reporting schemes both for the results of the various discrete elements of the assessment effort, as well as for the collective whole via the Assessment Committee and the Assessment Center Director. Implementation of the plan has already begun on the campus and the plan appears likely to allow the college to better and more concisely determine whether institutional objectives in general education are being achieved.

In responding to national trends "to assess" in general, and to SACS accreditation directives on institutional effectiveness in particular, the college has acquired, via the plan developed, an institutionally supportive means of monitoring core curricular programming and outcomes. Simultaneously, use of the results of the wide range of assessment techniques provided for in the plan can be expected to lead to improvements that enhance programming and student outcomes, and ultimately the attainment of institutional mission.

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APPENDIX A

TAXONOMY OF OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN'S COLLEGE CORE CURRICULUM

TAXONOMY OF OUTCOMES

SKILLS	GENERAL KNOWLEDGE	VALUES
Literacy - Reading - Writing - Speaking - Listening	Contemporary Society - Historical Origins; Politics and Economics - Behavioral Sciences - Anthropology Sociology and Psychology - Global World View - Foreign Language, Cultural Relativity, International Perspective and World Geography	- Altruism - Honor - Aesthetics - Personal Responsibility and Achievement - Human dignity - Values Clarification
Critical Thinking - Analysis - Problem Solving - Arithmetic Computation - Research	Cultural Heritage - Literature - Philosophy and Religion - Fine Arts	
Computer Competency	Natural World - Natural Sciences - Health and Wellness - Mathematics	

APPENDIX B

BRENAU WOMEN'S COLLEGE CORE
CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

Women's College Core Studies Required Courses

SD 100	ACT I - Introduction to College	1
CS 101	Composition and Speech	5
CS 102	Literature and Composition	5
CS 104	General Psychology	5
CS 105	Introduction to Sociology	4
CS 107	World Civilization and Institutions I	5
CS 108	World Civilization and Institutions II	5
CS 109	Politics and Economics	5
CS 110	College Algebra with Applications	5
FH/SH	Elementary Foreign Language Proficiency	5
JP 101	(This proficiency requirement can be met independently or by taking FH/SH/JP 101. Students haveing had an average grade of C or better in foreign language may exempt the requirement, or exemption may be achieved by Placement Test. **No credit for exemption.** All BA degree candidates **must** take the Placement Test. International students may use 5 hours of Brenau I.E.L.P. credits in ESL to meet this requirement).	
CS 201	Western World Literature	5
CS 204	Philosophy and Religion	5
CS 205	Forms of Artistic Expression	4
CS 206/ 207/208	Integrated Science I, II, III or	15
BY 101/102 PS 100	Biology and Physical Science	

Health and Leisure Studies		
WH 101 WH 102	Women's Health Issues	2
LF -- LF --	Lifetime Fitness	2
LS --	Leisure Sports	1
RI --	Recreational Intramurals	1
Total Women's College Core Studies		80

Elective Support Courses

BA 105	Microcomputer Competency	5
SD 101	Study Skills	1
SD 102	Introduction to Critical Thinking	1
SD 103	Cross Cultural Awareness	1
PH 100	Values Clarification	1
GY 100	Elements of Geography	1

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SACS PERSONNEL

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DR. JOHN SITES, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF COMMISSION ON COLLGES, SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS (SACS)

Re: Core curricular assessment and SACS criteria.

The following questions require response from a SACS perspective.

1. How do SACS criteria relate to outcomes assessment in the Core Curriculum?

2. What are SACS criteria guidelines/expectations for institutional effectiveness as it applies to general education component of the undergraduate education program?

3. What are other colleges doing to assess core curriculum outcomes, especially other small colleges like Brenau? What are some models for consultation?

4. What lessons has SACS learned since establishment of the institutional effectiveness guidelines in 1985 and mandatory implementation in 1987? How has SACS viewpoint/enforcement been modified, intensified, or become less intense on the issue over time and based on visitations since 1987? Will there be revisions soon? Will this emphasis continue?

5. How ideally should a 4 year plan for core curriculum assessment be structured? How much testing, how often, of whom? How do you assess knowledge areas other than the not-necessarily -so -well - matched standardized test? Do you focus on samples for purposes of assessing the program results (in this case core curriculum program) as opposed to each individual student's gains? Does SACS define the level of assessment required (institutional, program, individual student)?

6. In the knowledge areas of Brenau's core, specifically, what would constitute good assessment of outcomes? Skills are demonstrable via speeches and writing samples with specific criteria, but what (short of the aforementioned standardized tests which rarely match our curriculum and certainly not our detailed outcome statements) would offer us the best means of assessing the attainment of say philosophy or social science or behavioral science outcomes globally?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRESIDENT OF BRENAU AND SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRESIDENT OF BRENAU COLLEGE

TOPIC: THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF A CORE CURRICULUM OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PROGRAM FOR BRENAU WOMEN'S COLLEGE

1. Do you see the outcomes assessment movement continuing or fading into the decade of the 1990s?

2. Do you see related SACS criteria (on assessment or institutional effectiveness) changing in the near future?

3. What do you sense other CIC/private colleges feel about and are doing with assessment?

4. Do you know of any good models (perhaps from the CIC Phoenix meeting) for educational program assessment, particularly of the core curriculum? Any recommended contacts?

5. What do you feel should be Brenau's focus? Standard tests? Local tests? Surveys? Pre-post testing? Focus interviews? Writing samples? A Regents - type exam? A master database following cohorts on traditional Institutional Research issues of enrollment, persistence, completion behavior?

6. What do you think of portfolios as a means of both tracking student progress and evaluating core outcomes and effectiveness overall?

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH BRENAU'S PRESIDENT

The President of Brenau College stated he did not see the assessment movement diminishing nor the SACS institutional effectiveness criteria changing in the near future. He felt SACS might offer more specific suggestions as they discovered what worked, but various models would allow schools continuing options. He stated that the climate on assessment he had sensed among the independent college administrators with whom he had conversed was one of acceptance, that assessment was here to stay. The smaller the school, the more they seemed to be doing, and the more familiar they already seemed to be with their student constituency. However, he could not suggest any specific models of core curricular assessment from his contact with other institution presidents, particularly at a recent Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) conference. He stated there is little talk among college presidents on academic or curricular matters, at least at this point when assessment is still too new. Further he stated that most presidents are content specialists as opposed to core generalists.

With respect to Brenau's direction and focus in core curricular assessment Burd offered the following reactions to standardized testing and portfolio approaches. He hastened to point out that he had limited familiarity with the details of the assessment movement, but felt any standardized examination needed to be validated for its correspondence to what was being taught at Brenau as well as how it was being taught. He personally felt it was foolish to go with a myriad of standardized tests; he felt the College was getting to a point where it did not need such tests but rather was confident of its desired outcomes and should measure not only academic productivity but other desired outcomes as well, such as growth in maturity and leadership abilities.

Burd (1990) supported the concept of portfolio assessment for both the faculty and school's purposes as well as for purposes of convincing students of what they have learned, and to help them integrate past, present and future learning. He saw the portfolio as a potentially useful tool for advising and for connected learning, but not for lock-step assessment. He felt students should probably be responsible for making their portfolios truly productive by maintaining their own section beyond that which faculty submitted for them or requried them to submit minimally. He recommended end of the year reviews and reactions by the students.

Burd (1990) expressed the hope that assessment would be undertaken not for outside bodies or even accountability to the public but rather for the sake of the institution as a means of knowing if we are accomplishing what we claim to

be doing. The President said he was committed to finding ways to do it the least expensively as well, avoiding unnecessary purchase of standard tests in particular. He felt the Brenau faculty was well along the road of assessment that hopefully would lead them into more classroom research. He believed the major result of assessment should be to lead faculty to value teaching more, but also to support teaching with research data. The end result would be better classrooms and better instruction.

Finally Burd (1990) felt that assessment would change the way we talk about our graduates. The focus, he stated, would be on skills developed, attitudes changed, and content strenghts acquired to meet the needs of employers and the requirements of graduate schools. In the long run, he asserted, the assessment focus would give the school greater credibility.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS/DEAN OF BRENAU AND SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VPAA AND DEAN OF BRENAU
SUBJECT: CORE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT AT BRENAU

1. How do you envision the Portfolio project after this academic year? Would you continue to maintain portfolios in the Assessment Center for this year's freshmen who continue as sophomores?
Do you envision us keeping portfolios on all incoming freshmen next fall? Would we consider: volunteers? a sample group? coordination with ACT I advisors? student maintained portfolios, perhaps with quarterly advisor-student review? What about transfers?

2. What direction do you see us taking with faculty approved Critical Thinking and Values outcomes? Most are not course embedded or so identified, though most could be. The Assessment Committee seems to feel we should integrate them and place such outcomes on syllabi where most are logically identifiable in required core courses.

3. Outcomes for the Core are so detailed and so "unmanageable". Do you envision a review point campuswide at some time to reduce the agreed upon outcomes to a manageable and yet comprehensive list of BROAD objectives/outcomes for the core? The Roanoke model comes to mind!

4. What ongoing assessment of core curricular outcomes do you feel Brenau should undertake past the SACS visit? What if any standardized testing would you recommend? Of whom, how often? What responsibility if any do you feel departments have to demonstrate effectiveness in the delivery of their core course outcomes beyond syllabi statements of goals and final course grades?

5. The computer, geography, and cross cultural outcomes are not course specific within the required core, yet easily verified via elective coursework or via limited independent study. The Assessment Committee felt it would be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back to ADD the geography and cross cultural outcomes to the World Civilization courses for actual assessment? (though reinforcement of these outcomes is clearly happening in those courses). Will we continue to require these outcomes as part of the core? (Committee and faculty approval would indicate "yes".) Assuming we DO require the outcomes, what about transfer students? Do we assume they too must meet the non-embedded outcomes before graduation, including computer competence?

6. On the issue of transfers, the committee felt expediency required acceptance of transfer credit without review of competencies for normally equivalent coursework.

Yet they wonder how do we differentiate (or do we need to?) the outcomes of Brenau's CS 101 Freshman English which includes required Speech outcomes when most transfers will not likely have met that competency? Do we try a seal on the diploma indicating a student took all the Brenau core? Does the transfer of a single course eliminate a seal? Who monitors/reviews?
OR.. Do we just claim a wonderfully designed liberal arts core curriculum full of opportunities to gain excellent competencies with which to face the world of the 21st century, allowing transfers of relative comparability as always, and move on! Still requiring computer, geography and cross cultural extras?

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH BRENAU'S VICE PRESIDENT

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Brenau, supported the continuation of the pilot portfolio project, initiated in the Women's College of Brenau with freshmen only in the fall 1990, as the centerpiece of Brenau's core curricular assessment effort. The Dean pointed out that the philosophy of the portfolio approach to core curricular assessment relied upon the syllabus as representative of the integrity of the curriculum. Each course was part of the curriculum which in turn reflected the objectives of Brenau. The portfolio should attest to student performance on the outcomes stated in the syllabus for each core course, and the instructor of record was responsible for assessing those designated outcomes/objectives. In turn, the regular evaluation system of the college, completed annually by department chairmen, attested to the "assessors."

In addition to the portfolios, the Dean suggested the College might use a standardized test to raise core curricular and instructional issues. But students should be informed that the tests and our curricular objectives were sometimes different, whereas the portfolios were direct measures of effectiveness and should contain products demonstrating the syllabus outcomes. If no other product was available, final exams from core classes should be included in the portfolios and were expected to be cumulative. Faculty could choose to include an outcomes checkoff list on each student, signing and attesting to the degree of acquisition of the course outcomes.

It was further suggested the College might choose in future to integrate use of the portfolios into the ACT II Undecided Major Seminar, and/or the ACT IV Senior Opportunity Seminar focusing on the job search. The portfolios of students leaving Brenau might be worth reviewing for a profile of "leavers". It was suggested the College not concern itself at this point with maintaining portfolios on transfers, but rather concentrate on each incoming freshman class and its persisters.

With regard to the assessment of interdisciplinary outcomes such as critical thinking, cross cultural awareness, geography and values clarification, it was stated that these outcomes and their assessment needed to be integrated into existing required core coursework. Elective support courses in these areas could continue if the relevant department chairs chose to staff them.

The Vice President stated that the faculty approved core curricular outcomes did not require a campuswide review again soon but rather changes should evolve naturally by consensus within the disciplines. Help in these adjustments should be provided by the college's Assessment Committee.

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONS FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS ON CURRENT PRACTICE IN CORE CURRICULAR ASSESSMENT AND SUMMARIES OF FIVE COLLEGE INTERVIEW RESULTS

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW GUIDELINE QUESTIONS

Interviews with selected colleges re: core curriculum assessment

1. Do you focus assessment on the whole core/general education program or on specific student outcomes? Or neither? Or both?

2. Do you have a system for assessing core student outcomes in particular? If so, could you describe your core outcomes?

3. What is your institutional definition of "assessment?" i.e. what focus do you think of?

4. Likewise, what does "institutional effectiveness" involve at your institution?

5. Has accreditation impacted your institution's views on assessment? What other guidelines/mandates are you working under?

6. Have you consulted with other schools/experts on core assessment especially, but assessment approaches in general?

7. What are your institution's views on standardized vs. inhouse created tests, or on testing in general outside of classes?

8. How is your core curriculum assessment organized? Is there a plan_____, a central location_____ (for core assessment), specific leadership_____, formative and summative evaluation procedures_____, if so, by whom? (students____, faculty_____, administration_____, outsiders_____)?

9. Do you use portfolios in your core curriculum assessment? What do you collect and what do you do with it?

10. By what means did you select the specific elements of the assessment approach you are using?

SUMMARIES OF FIVE COLLEGE INTERVIEW RESULTS

Roanoke College Interview Results

The director of Institutional Research at Roanoke reported that the college was halfway through implementation of its new general education curriculum plan, having begun with freshmen entering in the fall of 1989. When queried as to what assessment of the new program was underway or planned, he stated that Peter Ewell of NCHEMS had been hired as a consultant to assist the college in responding to SACS institutional effectiveness guidelines as well as to help design maneageable ways to measure the new curriculum. One of the strongest messages received from the consulting visit, according to Larson, was not to make the whole process unduly complicated. The concept of program evaluation on a sampling basis was recommended over the individual student outcomes evaluation approach. Larson stated that Roanoke was not taking the Alverno approach to individual student outcomes but rather focusing, as suggested, on program assessment and SACS institutional effectivenss criteria. At this point, he said, no means of measuring the overall core had been determined since they were still two years away from full implementation. However, he foresaw using the broad, capstone Senior Reading Course as the most likely point of overall evaluation of results and he did not foresee the use of standardized tests. Larson did state the one advantage he saw in standardized testing was obtaining national norms for comparison.

Larson (1990) reported that Ewell had recommended the use of a senior exit interview to assess in the majors, and Larson felt this approach could also integrate assessment of the general education outcomes. He recommended reviewing a sample of senior interviews for evidence of core growth or alternately developing focus interviews or structured group interviews to review core outcomes.

Larson 1990) further explained that since 1984 the college had used a Program Evaluation Panel of faculty to evaluate all the college's programs every five years. The general education program was part of this rotation of reviews. Faculty were selected from the academic standards committee, the curriculum committee, the resources committee and the Panel was chaired by a Dean. Examination included faculty activity, grade distributions, outcomes data where available, etc. Two outside evaluators (generally from neighboring states but not always) who were recommended by relevent faculty or professionals were invided to make a two day site visit and write a report back to the Panel evaluating the program and the Panel's own findings.

With respect to the use of portfolios in core assessment, Larson (1990) commented that their use to date

at Roanoke had been restricted to the full year Writing Course required of all students. Students were required to turn in a computer diskette of their work to be archived. However, to date no evaluation of the work beyond the class instructor's had been undertaken nor was anticipated. The idea of obtaining a writing sample at matriculation to add to the student's file had been discussed and it was suggested the topic should be on a values-related topic. This way the writing sample could serve the dual purpose of baseline data for later growth comparisons in writing ability as well as being used again in the required Values and the Responsible Life course to evaluate development in that area. Meanwhile, Ewell had recommended that portfolios not be maintained on all students but rather a selected sample, focusing on the median performers of a class and using independent evaluators as opposed to the class instructor.

With regard to oral communication skills, Larson (1990) stated that Roanoke had no required speech course. Their plan was to build oral communication outcomes into the majors perhaps via the capstone course and through presentations required in various courses. No formal speech curriculum was anticipated nor did either the SACS reaffirmation team (which had recently visited) nor Ewell give the impression such was necessary.

Millinger (1990), Director of General Education at Roanoke, shared the following additional thoughts on core curricular assessment at Roanoke. She reported that currently assessment plans were linked to the seven prescribed courses of the core and their specified goals. No effort was being made at this time to assess in the Science/Mathematics or Social Science areas which still operated on a distribution basis. Across the curriculum assessment was planned in writing, critical thinking, and oral communication, and to some extent the values outcomes.

Millinger (1990) reported that the details of the revised sampling approach to student writing portfolios were in the process of being worked out by the Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee. She stated that Roanoke was getting away from the unwieldy Alverno type approach to portfolios initially anticipated to be used in the advising process. It was determined Roanoke did not have the funds to support the project and furthermore the academic computer center was being overloaded by the required writing submissions for all students. Faculty support was likewise problematic. In addition, Ewell's consultant report suggested the original process required too much paperwork and he recommended sampling. Even with sampling over four years, Millinger acknowledged that Roanoke still had to determine how they will assess student writing for composition and critical thinking skills. It was anticipated that readers would be trained to assess via the fourth year Reading Seminar, particularly for critical thinking skills. Meanwhile the core faculty had hammered

out specific criteria on critical thinking which were addressed/taught in the three-semester required civilization sequence in the sophomore and junior years. Thus the skills to be evaluated in the senior Reading Seminar had been addressed earlier in the curriculum and evaluators would have established criteria to work with.

Millinger suggested one area that might utilize a standardized test was the values area. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), operated out of the University of California at Berkeley, was already being administered to freshmen and the possibility was being explored of readministering it to juniors to measure growth or change in values goals. It was suggested that a writing sample on values be obtained from freshmen and be reviewed and rewritten in the junior year to detect growth. Potentially the faculty of the values course would read and compare the freshman and junior essays. Sampling as opposed to testing everyone was again at issue with the CIRP instrument.

Millsaps College

Interview Results

The Associate Dean at Millsaps College explained that there was no administrator in charge of general education assessment at the college, but rather that fell under the general purview of the Academic Dean. However, two faculty members, one in the Education Department and one in the English department, had been working on the development of portfolio procedures for assessment in both the core and the majors. The Director of the Writing Program in the Department of English and Coordinator of Writing Assessment at Millsaps was also identified as the Chair of the Core Council and the best source of information on the new core at Millsaps.

Wilson (1990) reported that Millsaps' core was highly related to the Alverno approach, and the Clayton State adaptation, with certain abilities identified they hoped students would develop during their tenure at the college. Currently Millsaps depended upon its historic comprehensive exams for seniors to demonstrate the acquisition of these abilities. In addition, the upper level writing course required for graduation demanded that students submit a portfolio as evidence of their writing skills and intellectual development. The portfolio was evaluated by the Writing Council with representatives from each academic division. As Millsaps' new and even more writing-intensive core was fully implemented in 1992, the portfolio requirement was envisioned as the mechanism for connecting students' courses and their learning experience over time, and as a strong statement by the college that their classes were connected.

Wilson (1990) explained that the last two classes of entering freshmen have had as a graduation requirement the

completion of a "W" (writing) course. Faculty workshops have been offered at the college since 1985 and were mandatory for faculty wishing to have their course designated as a "W" option. Six of the nine new core courses were designated "W" courses and a standard form had been developed whereby the teaching faculty endorsed a student's writing sample, indicating what number of revisions it represented, etc. Wilson (1990) pointed out that Millsaps early on determined they could not assess everything and decided to focus on writing and thinking skills across the general education curriculum. They also opted for the portfolio measurement approach as opposed to standardized testing, seeing it as more integrated into actual coursework, and allowing students to reflect on their learning. With the writing intensive approach of their new core, traditional freshman English had virtually been eliminated at Millsaps. However, all students including transfers were required to take Introduction to Liberal Studies and the upper level writing course, although Millsaps had an elaborate and generous system of transfer otherwise. Wilson (1990) also reported that core curriculum courses were not "owned" by any department but instead the Core Council was like a department overseeing the evolution of the core curriculum.

Memphis State University
Interview Results

An initial interview was held with an Education Department faculty member from Memphis State who presented at the October 1990 assessment conference held at the university. His topic was the use of Robert Pace's CSEQ (College Student Experience Questionnaire) to assess general education. Davis (1990) explained that Astin's student involvement theory was at the base of Pace's instrument. That theory holds that retention in college and learning itself depend on the extent of a student's involvement in his education. Pace's instrument was seen by Davis to be an operationalization of Astin's concept. At Memphis State, the general education "civic outcome" of creating broadly educated beings who participate in their society was thought to be measureable via the Pace CSEQ which calculates a student's "involvement" in his academic experience.

Davis (1990) reported that the CSEQ was administered to Memphis State students in both the old, largely distribution-oriented core as well as the new, largly prescribed, general education core with integrated coursework. Engagement of students in the two curricula were compared. It was found that, in general, the new prescribed interdisciplinary core resulted in more student engagement and involvement.

The CSEQ was not perceived to provide significant enough assessment results with respect to specific Brenau

core outcomes to warrant the expense of a standardized instrument. It was determined that Brenau's volunteerism or civic responsibility outcome/requirement could instead be measured via Brenau's existing ACT I freshman orientation program using reporting forms to be completed by the student and the organization for which she volunteered her time.

Additional information on the assessment of general education at Memphis State was provided by the Director of General Education. The assessment of general education at the university was described by Sigsbee in terms of a two by four matrix. The two levels of assessment were the course level and the program level. Course level assessment was divided into Student Learning, Student Perceptions and Faculty Perceptions. Program Level assessment was undertaken in those three categories as well as a fourth area, Student Behavior.

Sigsbee (1990) described Course Level assessment of Student Learning to involve examinations on a rotating basis among general education courses with questions linked to general education objectives as opposed to course content. Following testing, course instructors interpreted the results. On the Program Level, Student Learning was measured by the Board of Regents required ACT COMP test or the ETS Academic Profile. Since Tennessee awards Performance Funding based in part on the results of this standardized testing, Sigsbee was optimistic that the new prescribed and interdisciplinary core would enhance scores at Memphis State.

Course Level Student Perceptions were reported to be measured by a questionnaire developed by the General Education Committee and course instructors to reflect the general education goals of each course. At the Program Level, the CSEQ was used to estimate gains in general education. Focus groups were an additional approach to program level assessment of student perceptions anticipated for future use. In addition, alumni satisfaction surveys were already used by Board of Regents mandate.

Faculty Perceptions at the Course Level were evaluated by course coordinators. Faculty were asked to review student perceptions and offer their interpretation of same for each course. At the program level, a questionnaire was developed soliciting impressions of student growth in the core, but this instrument is currently being reworked.

Finally, Student Behavior, as previously stated, was assessed at the Program Level only via the CSEQ instrument. This questionnaire, like the ACT COMP and the Academic Profile, provided Memphis State with nationally normed comparisons of their student population.

It was explained that the General Education Committee developing the new core and its assessment procedures had met three hours weekly over the past year to hammer out the details and policies. Sixty-four courses were now in place and each area had certain guidelines with regard to which

courses would satisfy its criteria. It was strongly suggested that schools developing core assessment approaches adhere to the golden rule of assessment: start small, involve the faculty in all stages, and use existing materials.

Carson-Newman College
Interview Results

The Dean of Academic Special Programs at Carson-Newman described the general education requirements of the college and the developing plan of assessment. Six broad goals permeated the general education program and were designed to help students 1)communicate effectively; 2)reason logically; 3)develop an awareness of religious traditions and Christian commitment; 4)enhance personal and social responsibility; 5)broaden their world perspective; and 6)develop a breadth of common knowledge deemed essential for a well-educated person. A variety of distribution requirements guided students in course selection to achieve these goals.

With respect to assessment, Osborne (1990) reported that, like Brenau, Carson-Newman was in the process of developing a plan. Meanwhile, he said, procedures currently in place included maintaining GRE records of their graduates, and the administration of a senior survey for graduating students. The survey consisted of self-reported gains in the six competencies listed above. The Carson-Newman senior survey appeared to have a focus similar to the proposed Brenau locally developed questionnaire to be administered in conjunction with a standardized test of general education.

An evolving element of the assessment plan at Carson-Newman was described as a senior interview of one to two hours, either one-on-one with a faculty member or in the form of focus interviews in a group situation. Probing questions on the general education competenices would seek to determine level of knowledge and growth. Interviewers would then render clinical judgments according to Osborne (1990). Based on their collective findings, they would reflect on the state of the general education program and make recommendations for improvements.

Carson-Newman piloted the above approach with a consortium of colleges through a University of Kentucky grant and discovered it was hard to be efficient and guarantee useful information. However, the experience proved to be useful to faculty involved. Carson-Newman decided not to transcribe or record the interviews but rather to let the faculty glean what value they could from them and report back.

With respect to standardized testing or portfolio assessment of general education, Osborne (1990) suggested neither was being used at Carson-Newman presently in any uniform way, since each department was developing its own

plan. He did say that the college would consider standardized testing options in the future, although he admitted there was much reluctance among the faculty. The primary fear was the negative experience in the K-12 public schools where the educational process was changed by the testing and "teaching to the test" became the norm. Osborne (1990) stated that Carson-Newman, as a liberal arts college, was more inclined to look for more qualitative approaches to assessment.

Clayton State College
Interview Results

The Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Director of General Education described the outcomes assessment oriented general education program of Clayton State College in Morrow, Georgia. The purpose of general education at Clayton, according to Rice (1990), was to develop a coherent, integrated program to help students acquire abilities and knowledge important to all graduates and which facilitates the systematic assessment of a student's progress vis a vis these outcomes. Two skills (communication and critical thinking) and six perspectives or knowledge-based frames of reference (aesthetic, contemporary, historical, mathematical, scientific and value perspectives) made up the outcomes of general education. Rice (1990) emphasized that the primary purpose of assessment at Clayton was to enhance student learning by clearly indicating expectations and by providing meaningful feedback to students. Only secondarily did assessment serve the purpose of evaluating programs. Further he stated (Rice, 1990) that assessment of outcomes at Clayton had evolved such that now all outcomes were course embedded and integrated; there were no longer any "do or die" assessments of a gatekeeping nature.

Rice (1990) stated that Clayton State was in its third year of administering the ACT CAAP (Collegiate Academic Asessment Program) to evaluate overall institutional effectiveness in the general education curriculum. Each year the Institutional Research office assisteds in identifying for testing a reasonably large sample of students in "area four" or early major sophomore classes who have completed a minimum of forty-five hours of the sixty hour general education requirements. Rice (1990) reported that the results of the ACT CAAP were used mainly as a benchmark to see if Clayton State was staying on the national norms and not doing any harm with its ideosyncratic approach to general education.

Rice (1990) stated that Clayton State had not utilized the portfolio approach to assessment. However, he affirmed that the college had several ongoing research projects related to general education assessment. A consultant was working with teams of faculty to determine and improve the reliability of institutional instruments and assessment

procedures. Specifically, inter-rater reliability studies had been undertaken and the results used to revise the criteria as necessary. These studies hade been especially useful in the areas of oral communication/speech and writing, according to Rice.

A final piece of the assessment effort at Clayton State, was described as involving a reporting requirement for faculty who were required to turn in the results or final ratings of student outcome assessments to the computer center. There a separate outcome file was maintained on each student and on each criterion. More than anything else this created a paper trail to demonstrate that the required assessments of general education outcomes had been done. The results were not part of a student's official record or transcript, but the data was maintained for potential future research. Furthermore, the requirement serveds a monitoring purpose to assure the use of the course embedded assessment instruments by the teaching faculty. Rice (1990) acknowledged the process involved a lot of paper and time and support staff. But at Clayton State, he reported, the process had become institutionalized and was now the new and accepted routine.

APPENDIX G

MODEL FORMS TO DESCRIBE AREA AND RELATED COURSE OUTCOMES

STUDENT OUTCOMES

_____
(Name of Core Outcomes area)

The student will be able to:

STUDENT OUTCOMES

A.

B.

C.

D.

COURSE NUMBER _____ TITLE _____

The student will be able:

STUDENT OUTCOMES	INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY FIELD COMPONENT	EVALUATION

APPENDIX H

SPREADSHEET TO DESCRIBE CORE ASSESSMENT

Fac App Core Curr Areas	Sub-Areas	Specific Outcomes ID'd	Placmnt/Pre-Tst Measure	Natl Norm(N) In House(I)	Related Crses Req(R)/Elec(E)
Literacy	Reading Writing Speaking Listening	YES	Eng Plcmnt Tst Speech PreTst Writing Smpl	N I I	CS-101(R) CS-102(R) CS-201(R) DS-100(?)
Critical Thinking	Analysis Prob Solving Research	YES	Eng Plcmnt- Crit Reasoning, Watson-Glaser	N N	SD-100(R) SD-102(E) CS-206(R)
Computer Competency		YES	NO		BA-105(E)
History/Politics/ Economics		YES	NO		CS-107(R) CS-108(R) CS-109(R)
Behavioral Science	Psychology Sociology	YES	NO		CS-104(R) CS-105(R)
Global World View	Foreign Lang Cultural Relativity Geography	YES	F/L Placmnt Tst NO Geo Pre-Tst	I I	FH/SH101-103(E) SD-103(E) GY-100(E)
Literature		YES	Writing Sample	I	CS-102(R) CS-201(R)
Philosophy & Religion		YES	NO		CS-204(R)
Fine Arts		YES	NO		CS-205(R)
Natural Sciences	Chemistry Physics Biology	YES	Pre-Tst Biology	I	CS206-208(R) or BY101-102, PS10
Health/Wellness	Women's Health Iss Leisure Sports Life Fitness Rec Intramurals	YES	Fitness Pre-Tst	I	WH-101(R) WH-102(R) LS...(R) LF...(R) RI...(R)
Mathematics	Computation Algebra/Prob Solving	YES	Placement Tst	I	DS102,104(?) CS-110(R)
Values Clarification	Altruism Honor Aesthetics Per Respons & Achiev Hum Dignity/Equality	YES	NO	NO	PH-100(E) SD-100(R) SD-103(E) CS-204(R) CS-205(R)
OVERALL ASSESSME NT OF WC CORE		YES	English Math	N I	

Fac App Core Curr Areas	Dept In Chg of Courses	Outcomes on Specific Syll?	ID'd Plan to Assess Each Area Outcome
Literacy	Humanities	YES(R)	Lit Terms Test, Speechs, Essays, Tests(Obj) Peer/Self Eval, Research Paper
Critical Thinking	X-Curriculum	SOME(E)	Plan Requires Cross-Curriculum Support
Computer Competency	Business	YES(E)	Validation Test
History/Politics/ Economics	Humanities	YES(R)	Objective/Essay Tsts, Term Paper, Daily Writing, Final Exam
Behavioral Science	Education	YES(R)	Objective/Essay Unit & Final Exams, Research Paper
Global World View	Humanities	YES(E)	F/L: Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing Unit & Final Exams, Writing Assign, Lab Tapes | Culture: Writing, Research, Presentations | Geography: Obj/Essay Tsts & Final, Maps, Research
Literature	Humanities	YES(R)	Quizzes, Essays, Critical Papers, Obj/Essay Tsts, Oral Reports, Speech, Peer/Self Eval, Literacy Tests
Philosophy & Religion	Humanities	YES(R)	Obj/Essay Tsts & Final, Term Paper, Class Contrib
Fine Arts	Fine Arts	YES(R)	Event Critique, Oral/Essay Exms, Video of Artifacts
Natural Sciences	Math-Science	YES(R)	Obj Tsts, Lab Rpts/Practicals, Problem Solving, Comprehensive Finals per Course
Health/Wellness	Education	YES(R)	Participation, Papers, Critiques, Obj/Essay Tsts, Surveys, Logs, Skills Tsts, Pre/Post Fitness Tsts
Mathematics	Math-Science	YES(R)	Chapter Tsts, Biographies Presentation & Tst, & Comprehensive Final
Values Clarification	X-Curriculum	Some in PH-100/ SD-100. Some Embedded but Not Stated in SD103, CS204-5	Act1 Honor Signed Honor Pledge, Volunteer Validation Form
OVERALL ASSESSME OF WC CORE	All Except Nursing	All Except Crit Thinking/Values	Primarily Course vs Area Specific,Values/Crit Think Skills Still Anchored

Fac App Core Curr Areas	Formative Assess Skills Knowledge	Opp for Extra-Crse Validation	Plan for Summ Assess of Area Outcomes	Peer or Outside Eval of Outcomes
Literacy	YES(F)	NO (CLEP?)	Post Placement Reading Tst, Final Speeh, Final Essay	Peer Eval of Speeches
Critical Thinking	SOME(E)	NO	NO	NO
Computer Competency	YES(E)	YES	In-House Val Tst	NO
History/Politics/ Economics	YES(F)	NO (CLEP?)	NO	NO
Behavioral Science	YES(F)	NO (CLEP?)	NO	NO
Global World View	YES(E)	YES (Planned for Spring '91)	In-House Tsts per Sub-Area	NO
Literature	YES(F)	NO (CLEP?)	Literacy Tst & Reading Post Assess	Peer Eval of Speech
Philosophy & Religion	YES(F)	NO	NO (Comprehen Final?)	NO
Fine Arts	YES(F)	NO	?	NO
Natural Sciences	YES(F)	NO (CLEP?)	NO	NO
Health/Wellness	YES(F)	NO	?	NO
Mathematics	YES(F)	YES	CS-110 Final(?), Part III Math Plcmnt Tst (?)	NO
Values Clarification	Potentially, in Several Core Classes	NO	NO	NO
OVERALL ASSESSME OF WC CORE	Yes, in Required Courses, and Elec	CLEP Tsts Not yet compared	Yes for Literacy & Computer. Otherwise	Peer Evals Used in Speech. NO Evidence

Fac App Core Curr Areas	Stud Interviews / Self-Eval?	Rising Junior Tst Prop for Curr Assess	Senior Exit Eval Prop for Curr Assess
Literacy	Self Eval of Speeches; Self Eval of Course Outcomes	NO	NO
Critical Thinking	NO	NO	NO
Computer Competency	NO	NO	NO
History/Politics/ Economics	NO	NO	NO
Behavioral Science	NO	NO	NO
Global World View	NO	NO	NO
Literature	Self Eval of Speech & Course Outcomes	NO	NO
Philosophy & Religion	NO	NO	NO
Fine Arts	NO	NO	NO
Natural Sciences	Self Eval of Outcomes (Biology)	NO	NO
Health/Wellness	NO	NO	NO
Mathematics	Self-Eval of Outcome Attainmnt	NO	NO
Values Clarification	NO	NO	Proposed by Outcomes Doc via Major or Exit Exam
OVERALL ASSESSME OF WC CORE	Self-Eval in Speech. Var Profs Piloting	Recommended by Assessment Comm,	Advisable! Perhaps periodically

Fac App Core Curr Areas	Standardized or In-House Area Sum Eval	Student Portfolio Contributions	Means of Comp Diff Cohorts' Outcome Att
Literacy	Standardized Reading & In-House Speech/ Writing	Writing Samples, Some Video Speeches, Pre/Post Tst Results	Pre/Post Placement Tsts and Text Achievement Tsts
Critical Thinking	Watson-Glaser Samples Standardized	Limited to ACT1 Survey of Pre-Dispositions	Watson-Glaser IF Administered Regularly
Computer Competency	In-House	Test Results	Test Scores
History/Politics/ Economics	NO	?	NO
Behavioral Science	NO	?	NO
Global World View	NO	Foreign Lang & Eng Writing Samples, Cross Cultural Comm Essays, Geog(?)	NO
Literature	Literacy Tst(In-House) Post Placement Reading (Stand)	Writing Samples, Speech Evals(Fac, Peer, Self | Literacy Tst Results, Post-Reading Grade	Literacy & Reading Post Test Scores
Philosophy & Religion	NO (FINAL?)	?	NO
Fine Arts	NO	?	NO
Natural Sciences	NO	?	NO
Health/Wellness	NO	?	Perhaps Fitness Tst Data
Mathematics	Comp Final In-House	NO	Not Specified
Values Clarification	NO	Signed Honor Pledge, Volunteerism Forms When Completed	NO
OVERALL ASSESSME OF WC CORE	Perhaps Periodic Standardized Tsts	Requested Voluntary Submissions from	

Fac App Core Curr Areas	Use of Measured Results to Improve Prog/Instruct
Literacy	?
Critical Thinking	NO
Computer Competency	?
History/Politics/ Economics	?
Behavioral Science	?
Global World View	?
Literature	?
Philosophy & Religion	?
Fine Arts	?
Natural Sciences	?
Health/Wellness	?
Mathematics	?
Values Clarification	?
OVERALL ASSESSME OF WC CORE	Needs to be Addressed

APPENDIX I

ASSUMPTIONS AND QUESTIONS IN CORE ASSESSMENT

GOAL= DEVELOPMENT OF LONG RANGE PLAN FOR CORE ASSESSMENT

POINT OF DEPARTURE!

ASSUMPTIONS=
1. We will continue to develop individual student progress data (via grades, faculty evaluations of outcome acquisition, portfolio documents, transcripts, student self-evaluations and peer evaluations of outcomes, pre-post test results, placement test results).

2. We might FOCUS data collection choices, evaluation, and reporting on the PROGRAM LEVEL and the COHORT LEVEL or even the institutional level, as opposed to the individual level. That is, the focus would be institutional or program (core curriculum) effectiveness. This would involve using the individual items described in 1.) above to measure the core. Students would not generally be "held back" on individual outcomes in a course except as it is built in by the course evaluation procedures.

3. Departments teaching core courses should develop their own means/recommendations for assessing the results of their core coursework -their effectiveness in achieving student success with the agreed upon outcomes. They should, however, be accountable for development of some reasonable measures and a plan for USING THE RESULTS to evaluate/modify/improve the curriculum and to review outcomes periodically for their appropriateness.

4. We assume the current agreed upon outcomes to be a "given" for the time being. However, one of our assessment goals must be to review and assess the WHOLE CORE at some point (not just the parts being assessed separately). A part of the long range plan must provide for such overall review/critique, whereby the appropriateness and effectiveness of the 80 hour core and its xxx outcomes is globally assessed using available/generated data.

QUESTIONS!

WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW?
1. What should the database contain?

2. On whom?

3. Do we track transfers? Or just take entering freshmen and follow as long as they are here?

4. How do we define a cohort? Freshmen who entered together and stayed? Anyone with xx to yy credit hours? Or can we gather data and design database such that we can define either way we wish?

5. Standardized testing? of whom, how often? Do we just test generic Brenau students within a "class" to measure our core curriculum?

6. Do we gather info on transfers - or blend them into testing by credits/courses taken in Brenau core?

7. How often do we update databank?

8. Do we want to recommend that CIRP results eventually get blended into our database (or viceversa) or some master database that will support assessment and student advising more effectively. Perhaps a printout of CIRP results should be included in portfolios at least for the review interviews.

9. SHOULD WE CONTINUE TO TRIAL RUN THE PORTFOLIOS/REVIEW INTERVIEWS--and exactly how? What should be included. HOW MIGHT WE COORDINATE THEM WITH ADVISING AND ADVISORS FOR GREATER PRODUCTIVITY/USEFULNESS?

10. Could we/should we get advisor feedback into portfolios, especially for freshmen.

11. Should high school transcripts and admission applications with essay be included in portfolio? Again, how MIGHT we coordinate advisor file information and portfolio academic feedback into some more useful/effective (perhaps!) system?

12. Should assessment be focused on PROGRAM analysis YET portfolios be maintained dor DUAL PURPOSE --as a source for random sample review to assess core in general AND for individual academic advising? Again the coordination issue.

13. Leadership is in our Purpose statement but nowhere explicitly covered in our outcomes -anybody care? or concerned? Is it implicit? Ignore for now, recommend consideration for later? (we can do that in a long range plan!)

14. HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH CRITICAL THINKING? Build in/ initiate assessment in various core classes during 4 year plan? Use Watson Glaser for value added across cohorts over time to measure impact of curriculum changes/focus to enhance critical thinking?

15. HOW DO WE DEAL WITH VALUES? Vince's plan -do we build it into the 4 year plan assuring the Philosophy/Religion class and the World Civ, Classes pick up and assess designated parts? Can all parts be interwoven into specific classes? Should they be? Perhaps most of them?

16. HOW DO OUTCOMES NOT COURSE CONNECTED RELATE TO GRADUATION? HOW APPLY TO TRANSFERS? Do we build as much as possible into required core classes and give Brenau students or transfers who take all of our core a designation on her diploma that she graduated with all Brenau core competencies?
This approach would keep the outcomes by placing them in required courses at Brenau, allow transfer of comparable coursework without administrative hassle with the outcomes (no designation on the diploma), and not impede anyone's graduation so long as they pass required coursework (the course grade will be presumed to be calculated to reasonably consider the required outcomes; at least they will be assured of being addressed!) The key to this approach being feasible is the collection of some sort of data on the key outcomes that allows us to periodically assess whether the students are "getting it", even if we don't hold them back in classes. For example, a geography test in World Civ. might be failed but wouldn't count enough to make a student fail a course (nor should it!) But if we maintained class grades on the geography test over time as an assessment measure we could follow the trends of cohorts or classes as to whether their geography awareness was improving in our curriculum .

WHAT ABOUT COMPUTER COMPETENCY? This may have to be one of the requirements that remains an option to take in class or get evaluated outside--BUT that is required to graduate from Brenau, even for transfers. This is one of the skills mentioned specifically in SACS criteria that we should assess.
AND WHAT ABOUT CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION OUTCOMES? the options now are one hour elective course, or elementary foreign language (not required of BS majors) or an outside test? In large part it is covered in World Civ, but how explicitly, and can they assess everything?! There is a value to x-curriculum efforts but it would take coordination and cooperation!

17. How about everyone being required to take geography or exempt via the outside test, even transfers (unless they have a georgraphy course or a description including geog.) Likewise, they must take cross-cultural awareness, or take an elementary foreign language course, or take the outside of class exemption test (same options for transfers). Likewise for computer competency, transfers might be allowed to use any elementary computer course to exempt, just as any foreign language course will exempt from cross cultural.
THIS APPROACH WOULD LEAVE TRANSFERS WITH SEVERAL OPTIONS FOR EXEMPTING EXTRA COMPETENCIES AND HOLD TO A MINIMUM BRENAU COMPETENCIES THEY MUST MEET OUTSIDE REQUIRED COURSEWORK. It seems only fair to the generic Brenau

student and the intent of our outcomes effort to keep these competencies required.

18. Should we recommend the assessment center be responsible for maintaining database with Math and English placement test results by cohorts each year? Should the center design reports that follow students through their English and Math sequences?

19. We need updated assessment plans for each area of the core, such as the English faculty is preparing, stating the location of outcomes, how measuring and reporting, what doing with results to review and improve the curriculum where indicated need, or revise outcomes if results suggest need.

20. Shall we build in the ACADEMIC PROFILE - when, where, how often, and with whom? Can we add a brief questionnaire to some administrations of the test asking students (maybe seniors when they are tested) to give us feedback on the core and its value to them, its organization, meaning, uselessness!

21. Where do we build in full faculty review of the core based on compiled and reported results? i.e. a reconsideration or endorsement of the effectiveness of the prescribed core and the agreed upon outcomes and our delivery of it?

APPENDIX J

DRAFT CORE CURRICULAR
ASSESSMENT PLAN

GOAL= DEVELOPMENT OF LONG RANGE PLAN FOR CORE ASSESSMENT

POINT OF DEPARTURE:

ASSUMPTIONS=

1. We will continue to develop individual student progress data (via grades, faculty evaluations of outcome acquisition, portfolio documents, transcripts, student self-evaluations and peer evaluations of outcomes, pre-post test results, placement test results).

2. We might FOCUS data collection choices, evaluation, and reporting on the PROGRAM LEVEL and the COHORT LEVEL or even the institutional level, as opposed to the individual level. That is, the focus would be institutional or program (core curriculum) effectiveness. This would involve using the individual items described in 1.) above to measure the core. Students would not generally be "held back" on individual outcomes in a course except as it is built in by the course evaluation procedures.

3. Departments teaching core courses should develop their own means/recommendations for assessing the results of their core coursework--their effectiveness in achieving student success with the agreed upon outcomes. They should, however, be accountable for development of some reasonable measures and a plan for USING THE RESULTS to evaluate/modify/improve the curriculum and to review outcomes periodically for their appropriateness.

4. We assume the current agreed upon outcomes to be a "given" for the time being. However, one of our assessment goals must be to review and assess the WHOLE CORE at some point (not just the parts being assessed separately). A part of the long range plan must provide for such overall review/critique, whereby the appropriateness and effectiveness of the 80 hour core and its xxx outcomes is globally assessed using available/generated data.

5. Major question to keep in mind in development of data gathering approaches is:
WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW? Ideally all assesment will contribute to the teaching learning experience, not interfere with it.

OUTLINE OF CURRENT CORE ASSESSMENT EFFORTS

I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF CORE
   1. Academic Profile ETS testing--sophomores and seniors. Should we add 5-10 local questions for student feedback on value of core to them and their understanding of the liberal arts foundation purpose?
   2. Portfolios for Freshmen (files for sophomores)-Related interviews. The Collection of sample work is only useful if we DO something with it! Thus the "interview to review/advise" concept, using planned standard questions with sample of students. But where from here-like for next year's freshman? Should we aim for coordination of use with advisors? Shall we continue one more year "as is" and build in a review of portfolios at that point?

II. VALUE ADDED PRE-POST SKILL ASSESSMENTS in reading, writing, speaking, math, and critial thinking
   1. Math placement test pre and post in DS104
   2. Speech pre-post videos per Billie Varnum's study
   3. Pre-post testing in all English classes-diagnostic and achievement (?)
   4. English Placement Test pretest with projected (?) post test in CS201 of Reading component
   5. Watson Glaser critical thinking measure by I.R. Office (if it has been continued)

III. COHORT TRACKING OVER TIME
   1. English Placement Test subscores on all Frosh and returning sophomores are on database
   2. Math Placement Test scores for 1990 frosh are going into a database (both Eng. and Math will use these databases henceforth, entered in Assessment Center)
   3. ETS Academic Profile group results. IF we administer to entering Freshmen each fall for baseline data then again to sophmore and senior (generic?) each spring, we will get value added comparison data over time. Can also compare classes/cohorts.

IV. COMPUTER SKILL ASSESSMENT
   1. Via BA105 or through outside of class "study on your own" assessment; no credit for latter, materials in library.

V. DATABASE INFORMATION- per student entering as freshman
1. Demographic and biographic
2. English and Math placement scores and subscores
3. English, math and total SAT scores
4. ?
5.

VI. DATA REPORT FORMATS INITIATED
1. Core Advisor's Sheet (automated?)
trying to coordinate with registrar's computer
2. QUATTRO report on English and Math Placement test results being developed- or will be coordinated with master data base
3. Math placement design from Ginny/Carolyn in works

VII. DIVISION EFFORTS WITHIN CORE TO COLLECT DATA AND ASSESS EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF OUTCOME GOALS AND STUDENT ACQUISITION OF SAME -i.e. effective teaching/learning
Various contributions:
1. Students' self-assessment of outcomes in courses
2. Some faculty reviewed the outcomes and the students'analyses of same and reacted.
3. In biology Jane Broaddus coordinated one or two outcomes with each test, then averaged class test grades for some indications of strengths/weaknesses. Sample of good classroom assessment.
4. Some pre-post testing with standard final exam across sections of a course.

VIII. ACROSS CURRICULUM ASSESSMENTS

1. Critical thinking plan: 3-4 year gradual build-in?
2. Values plan--need to specify/coordinate elements with various courses in Vince's plan to assure location on syllabi!
3. Transfer student issue! Consider for outcomes NOT embedded in courses

IX. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS/ TRANSFER STUDENT ISSUES
1. Diploma designation if complete BRENAU Core and all related competencies (i.e. no transfer core) ?
2. Embed outcomes/competencies as much as possible into required courses--accept reasonable transfer of credit as usual (but no competency designation on diploma)
3. EXCEPT : a) computer competency
b) cross cultural awareness
c) geography outcomes
must be validated by all graduates as minimums. Transfers may (?) present an elementary or above computer course for computer competency requirement, any foreign language or cross culture course for cross cultural awareness

competency, and evidence of geography coursework as a demonstration of acquired geography outcomes. Otherwise they would have to take the elective Brenau course just like our regular students OR like them self study and take offered exemption exams.

X. FULL FACULTY REVIEW OF CORE OUTCOMES AND COURSE DELIVERY SYSTEM

It seems imperative to build this into our long range plan somewhere! During next self-study or disciplinary analysis year?

APPENDIX K

FINAL BRENAU WOMEN'S COLLEGE
CORE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT
PLAN

BRENAU WOMEN'S COLLEGE CORE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT PLAN

I. GOAL

DEVELOPMENT OF A LONG RANGE PLAN FOR CORE ASSESSMENT AS ONE COMPONENT OF THE 4-PART BRENAU INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL.

The goal of core assessments will be to determine the extent to which Department actions and programs are supporting the agreed upon core curricular outcomes and ultimately the purpose and mission of Brenau.

II. ASSUMPTIONS

A. It is assumed that the current faculty developed and approved core curriculum educational outcomes as outlined in the Core Curriculum Program Book will be reflected on standardized syllabi and addressed across the various sections and instructor of a given course. However, a major assessment goal must be to review and assess the WHOLE CORE at some point (not just the parts being assessed separately). A part of the long range plan must provide for such overall review/critique, whereby the appropriateness and effectiveness of the 80 hour core and its xxx outcomes is globally assessed using available/generated data.

B. Individual student progress data will be developed via grades, faculty evaluations of outcome acquisition, portfolio documents, transcripts, student self-evaluations and peer evaluations of outcomes, pre-post test results, placement test results, questionnaires, surveys and standardized testing where appropriate.

C. The FOCUS of data collection choices, evaluations, and reporting will be on the PROGRAM LEVEL and the COHORT LEVEL or even the institutional level, as opposed to the individual level. That is, the focus will be institutional or program (in this case core curriculum) effectiveness. This would involve using the individual items described in (2) above to measure the core. Students would not generally be "held back" on individual outcomes in a course except as it is built in by the course evaluation procedures and grades.

D. Departments teaching core courses should develop and be accountable for their own means/recommendations for assessing the results of their core coursework, that is, assessing their effectiveness in achieving student success with the agreed upon outcomes. In addition, departments and their faculty will have a plan (a) for USING THE

RESULTS of their assessments to evaluate, modify or improve the curriculum and (b) to review area outcomes periodically for appropriateness.

E. A major question to be kept in mind in development of data gathering approaches is: WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW??? Ideally all assessment will contribute to the teaching learning experience, not interfere with it.

F. Successful and meaningful assessment requires the personal identification and genuine commitment of the college administration.

G. Faculty participation in curriculum design and assessment of outcomes is critical to successful implementation of institutional effectiveness efforts. Faculty resistance is natural and to be expected. Successful plans must demonstrate institutional commitment to truly enhancing, not interfering with, the teaching/learning experience, and must never dictate the instructional process.

H. Maintaining momentum during assessment implementation will be difficult and will require coordination of assessment efforts with the regular evaluation, planning and budgeting cycles of the College, specifically in conjuction with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the functions of her office.

I. Certain costs must be expected to accompany assessment efforts, both out-of-pocket direct expenses and indirect costs such as investment of time. In particular, the purchase of tests and surveys, release time and/or salaries for a coordinator and clerical personnel, must be budgeted. Many other assessment assets may already exist on the campus and should be inventoried and utilized. Policy decisions on other assessment efforts will determine other costs.

RATIONALE FOR PLAN ELEMENTS

In general, the aforementioned assessment approaches were selected based upon literature review of current practice and experience at other colleges, review of SACS institutional effectiveness criteria and interviews with SACS personnel and Brenau College administrators, analysis of available standardized tests of general education, budget, personnel and time restraints at Brenau College, and availability of pre-existing data sources. An attempt was made to utilize varying types of assessment ranging from nationally normed tests to student self assessments, all within the means of the college. Continual adjustments

to the plan are anticipated as data and ongoing evaluation suggest the value or lack of value in the various approaches tried.

III.PLAN ELEMENTS

A. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE CORE.

1. Academic Profile Test-ETS short version. This nationally normed and criteria referenced test of general education skills was trial run with a group of Brenau sophomores and seniors in February 1991 providing baseline data. The test should be administered to Freshmen in the fall of 1991, with followup testing in the Spring of 1993 with then current sophomores and seniors who started at Brenau as freshmen. A two year cycle of testing will provide value added data on both individual students and cohorts.

2. Student questionnaire on development in core outcomes. A locally developed questionnaire will request responses on which core courses a student has taken to date at Brenau. A Likert scale series of questions on core outcome development perceived as a result of courses taken at Brenau would follow. Open ended questions address the importance of a liberal arts general education.

3. Portfolio tracking of core results. Each cohort entering in the fall of an academic year will have portfolios maintained on them in the Assessment Center. Each portfolio shall contain the Women's College Core Taxonomy of Outcomes and be divided into sections for the thirteen identified outcomes areas including skills, knowledge, and values. Faculty teaching in the core will be asked to contribute documentation of student acquisition of the outcomes to the portfolios each quarter. The syllabus for each course, containing a list of required outcomes, will be included as well.

4. Portfolio review interviews. Interviews would be arranged between students being tracked and faculty of the Assessment Committee as a means of reviewing the contents of sample portfolios, the progress of random students in the core, and overall core effectiveness. The interviews would also assist in determining which assessment processes appear to provide the most useful information. Results would be compiled and reported.

B. VALUE-ADDED, PRE-POST SKILL ASSESSMENTS.

Particularly in the identified skills areas, pre and post testing to determine the influence of a course on the learner will be undertaken. Specifically, pre and post testing will take place in developmental math, algebra,

developmental English and across the English sequence (CS101, 102, and 201). Writing skills will be analyzed over time and samples collected for comparison. Reading skills will be tested in placement, and the same test administered in the Sophomore English course as a post measure.

Critical thinking assessments (both locally developed self-assessments of predisposition to think critically and the standardized Watson Glaser) will be repeated for comparative results as well. Courses such as biology, which lend themselves to pretesting with the actual course final exam, will be encouraged to do such pre and post examinations for comparison at end of course.

C. ACROSS THE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENTS.

1. Critical thinking outcomes will be "distributed" across the core according to faculty reported locations where they are already being addressed. Faculty will be asked to submit "portfolio evidence" for same, and to include the specified outcomes on their syllabi.

2. Values clarification outcomes are projected to be surveyed across the core and eventually integrated as with critical thinking, beginning academic year 1991-1992. Elements such as volunteerism and the honor code will be implemented initially in ACT I Freshman Orientation.

D. OUT-OF-CLASS COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS.

Various competencies required in the Women's Core Curriculum but not tied to required coursework may be assessed by testing which will be made available independent of support coursework offered. Such documentation of competency can be validated in Geography, Cross Cultural Awareness and Basic Computer Competency. Teaching faculty will provide self-study materials and testing guidelines in the library and set testing dates periodically, but at least once a year.

E. DATABASE AND DATA REPORTING FORMATS.

Each student entering as a freshman in 1990 and henceforth will have basic demographic and biographic information entered into her file in the Assessment Center database. Ideally this will be coordinated with the master database in the Registrar's Office for easy importation of data with minimal duplication of entry.

In addition, math and English placement test subscores and recommended placement will be maintained longitudinally in the Assessment Center database. SAT scores and Academic Profile scores will likewise be entered as will core course

grades, all of which could be statistically manipulated as desired in future.

Report forms will be developed to track individuals and cohorts in the overall core as well as independently in math and English progress.

F. COHORT TRACKING OVER TIME.

1. English placement test subscores (conventions of written English, sentence structure, critical reasoning and reading comprehension) on all entering freshmen will be collected each fall and filed on the database in the Assessment Center. Faculty recommendation for placement based on the scores will be indicated. Cohort mean scores will be calculated and graphs drawn to compare cohorts year to year. Correlation matrices will be designed to compare results on Verbal SATs with the various subparts of the Placement test. Placement test subscore averages will be compared with related subscore averages from the Academic Profile Test when administered to the same group. A post reading placement test is anticipated for sophomores and individual student progress will be calculated and mean gains graphed.

2. Math Placement Test subscores (arithmetic, pre-algebra, and algebra) will be collected on all entering freshmen each fall and entered into the Assessment Center database. Faculty recommendation for placement will be indicated. Cohort mean scores will be calculated and graphs drawn to compare cohorts year to year. Correlation matrices will be designed to compare results on Math SATs with the various subparts of the Placement test. Placement test subscore averages will be compared with related subscore averages from the Academic Profile Test when administered to the same group.

3. Academic Profile (ETS) total scores will be entered into the database for individual students tested. Subscores will be available and maintained on cohorts. Alternate year entering freshmen (fall quarter only) are to be tested with followup testing of the same cohort (those retained) in the spring of the sophomore (second) and senior (fourth) years.

4. Student self-reported assessment of development in the core curriculum will be evaluated via a locally developed questionnaire. The questionnaire will query students on their core course taking to date, their perception of development in the broad outcomes areas identified by faculty in the core taxonomy of outcomes, their views on the value of a liberal arts foundation and Brenau's success in providing one. The results will be entered into a spreadsheet and averages calculated on each

question. Freshmen will be asked to indicate the value they place on each outcome whereas sophomores and seniors completing the questionnaire in conjuction with Academic Profile testing will indicate perceived development as a result of their Brenau experience.

5. Baseline data from fall freshmen, and spring sophomore and senior groups testing with the Watson Glaser critical thinking tool has been gathered since 1988 by a Brenau faculty member. The Assessment Office and the Institutional Research Office will continue this pattern of testing to develop longitudinal data on Brenau students' growth in critical thinking skills. In addition, a locally developed self-assessment of critical thinking predispositions will be tracked with entering freshmen year to year.

G. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS ON CORE EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENTS AND USE OF RESULTS.

A key element of the core curricular assessment plan will involve annual or quarterly reporting by the core faculty to their respective departmental chairmen. In turn, chairmen will prepare a cummulative annual report on core assessment efforts to be included in their annual report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs in May. The assessment portion of the report will be forwarded by the VPAA to the Assessment Committee. A critical feature of the report will be a description of the results of assessments and the plans in place or envisioned to USE THOSE RESULTS TO IMPROVE THE TEACHING/LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

H. ANNUAL ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE/ASSESSMENT CENTER EVALUATION OF REPORTS/RESULTS, AND REPORT/RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEAN AND FACULTY.

The Assessment Committee will compile results across the core and report to the Dean and the Faculty, making recommendations as appropriate. An annual report will be made at the fall faculty retreat.

IV. EVALUATION OF THE CORE ASSESSMENT PLAN

A. Formative evaluation.

1. Annual Reviews of Chairmen and Faculty, compiled and reported by Director of Assessment.

2. Annual Assessment Committee portfolio review interviews and sample portfolio reviews, with reactions transcribed and reported.

3. Evaluation reports by math and English faculty, Assessment Committee and Academic Vice President

following review of results of core questionnaire, pre-post skill assessments and related database reports, the out-of-class competency assessment efforts, the ETS Academic Profile results, and the Watson Glaser critical thinking test results. These reactions to assessment plan elements will be added to Assessment Center annual formative plan evaluation file and reported accordingly.

B. Summative Evaluation.

1. Five year disciplinary analysis process, to include student, faculty, administration and outside evaluator reactions/reviews of the core curricular assessment plan.

2. Every tenth year the SACS reaffirmation team would constitute part of the outside evaluation of the core assessment plan.

APPENDIX L

BRENAU INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL, AND IMPLEMENTATION MODEL FOR PLANNING, RESEARCH AND EFFECTIVENESS

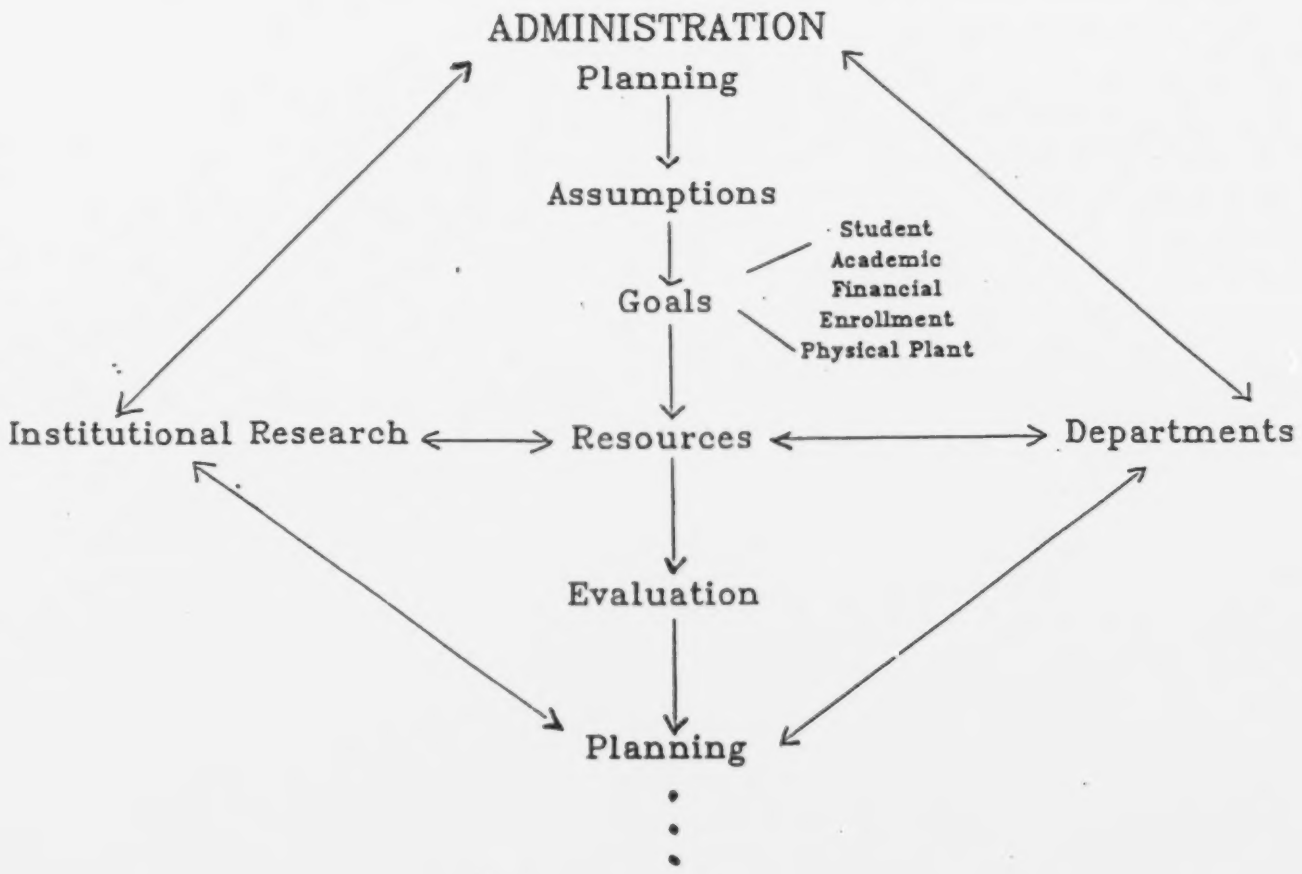
Brenau

Institutional Effectiveness Model

Topic	Responsibility
Institution Resources	President
Institutional Effectiveness	Vice President for Academic Affairs
Major Requirements	Department Chairmen
General Education Requirements (CORE)	Assessment Center and CORE Chairmen and Faculty

Brenau Implementation Model

Planning, Institutional Research and Effectiveness



APPENDIX M

MEMO RECOMMENDING USE OF ETS ACADEMIC PROFILE

MEMO TO: CORE DEPARTMENT CHAIRS
ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
CC: DEAN SULLIVAN
FROM: PATTY ROBINSON, ASSESSMENT CENTER
DATE: JANUARY 5, 1991
RE: RECOMMENDED USE OF ETS ACADEMIC PROFILE AS ONE MEANS OF ASSESSING THE CORE CURRICULUM, PROVIDING NATIONAL NORMS AS WELL AS CRITERION REFERENCED PROFICIENCY LEVEL DATA

RESPONSE REQUESTED BY WEDNESDAY JANUARY 9

The SACS Criteria on Institutional Effectiveness state that "institutions have an obligation to all constituents to evaluate effectiveness and to use the results in a broad-based continuous poanning and evaluation process (page 13). Institutions " . . .must establish adequate procedures for planning and evaluation . . ."(page 14). ". . . no specific format . . . is prescribed. . . . institutionsshould ascertain periodically the change in the academic achievement of their students. Procedures used to evaluate may include: peer evaluation of educational programs; structured interviews with students and graduates; changes in students' values . . .; pre and post testing; surveys of graduates or employers; student scores on standardized examinations or locally constructed examinations." . . ."The Commission on Colleges prescribes no set of procedures . . .and recognizes . . . effectiveness will usually require the use of a variety of procedures" (page 14).

In section IV on Education Program, it is stated: " . . .an institution must demonstrate how it will achieve these (academic) goals and how it will ensure overall effectiveness and quality consistent with the Criteria " (page 15). Further, in the Undergraduate Instruction section (page 19) "the effectiveness of instruction must be periodically studied. <u>The institution should evaluate the effectiveness of its instructional program by a variety of techniques which may include the use of standardized tests . . ."</u>

The above statements quoted from the Criteria combined with the impression Brenau received from the SACS preiminary review visit in November seem to suggest that the inclusion of some sort of nationally normed standardized test of general education outcomes might be strongly advised as a part of Brenau's outcomes assessment-institutional effectiveness measures. Particularly given the fact that our Women'scollege Core is spread over five departments, it would be difficult to develop and agree upon a comprehensive in-house test of general education. We have a good start on assessment measures within specific core courses, and we are developing portfolios and planning

sample focus interviews to evaluate the overall core "in-house." I suggest, however, that it would be in our best interest to submit ourselves to national comparisons at least on a trial basis as one means of evaluating our effectiveness in delivering the liberal arts foundation we advertise in our catalog.

We all recognize that institutions differ widely in both their intended outcomes and their populations, and no single standardized instrument can perfectly or even necessarily predominantly match an institution's curriculum. However, there are a growing number of instruments designed to assess general education and allow comparisons aomong institutions. The ACT COMP test has been particularly popular for assessing general knowledge, and has a 4 hour composite version as well as a 2-1/2 hour multiple choice objective test. Most of the colleges using ACT COMP have opted for the shorter test which does not require faculty grading. As stated in ACT literature, the test was designed based on a set of competencies or outcome domains commonly held by the participating institutions--generic outcomes as opposed to discipline or content based outcomes. Six areas of general knowledge are the focus of the test: communicating, solving problems, clarifying values, functioning within social institutions, using science and technology and using the arts. Individual as well as group scores are available on this test.

The more recently developed ETS Academic Profile offers an appealing alternative to the ACT COMP. ETS offers a long (2-1/2 hour) version as well as a short (40 minute - 36 questions) version of their test. Only group (cohort) scores are available on the short test, though 8 mean scores are calculated. Four skills are measured (reading, writing, critical thinking, using math data) within the context of three academic knowledge areas (humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences). Scores on these seven variables as well as a total score are reported for the group. Overall national norms are provided but institutions also have the option of selecting a minimum of 8 institutions to create a custom-designed reference group that we feel offers us truer comparability. In addition to the norm-referenced scores, criterion -referenced Proficiency Level data are provided for writing, math, and reading/critical thinking--suited to studying growth in learning.

Due to the brevity of the ETS Academic Profile, the fact that no additional faculty time is required in evaluation, the reasonable match of measured outcomes with Brenau's Taxonomy of Outcomes, and the availability of a Brenau-selected comparison group as well as general national norms, I am recommending that the Women's College administer the short form of the test to two populations this winter: all "generic" Brenau sophomores (those who

started as Freshmen at Brenau in 1989 and have been only exposed to Brenau's curriculum) and all "generic" Brenau seniors. The test presumes two years of college and these two groups would provide interesting criterion-referenced comparisons. I would recommend further that we plan to administer the Profile during Freshman Orientation in fall 1991 to all entering Freshmen to establish baseline data for future comparisons and longitudinal study. Long range, if we find the pilot study this winter suggests sufficient validity and value, we could study freshmen each fall and g4eneric sophomores and seniors each spring for value added comparisons and broad measures of the impact of curriculum changes.

One additional argument for the Academic Profile is its projected use by our own Professional College. ETS will allow us to score three separate groups for one institutinal fee--Profesional College students, our generic sophomores and our generic seniors. So in addition to outside comparisons, this one short test will also offer us some in-house comparisons.

Per Dr. Sullivan, use of this test as a measure of outcomes and effectiveness in the Women's College Core must receive the endorsement of those departments which are responsible for assessing portions of the core and thus are ultimately collectively responsible for assuring that we adequately meet SACS Criteria for assessment of general education. Therefore I am asking each of you to indicate your support or opposition to this proposal, and add any comments you wish. Ideally, if we are in agreement, we have time to order the tests immediately, arrange testing times, organize appropriate motivation for participation (perhaps via Panhellenic), and get the test results back before SACS visits in April.

In addition to Department Chairs, I would appreciate a response from all members of the Assessment Committee regarding this proposal. In encourage any of you who wish to discuss the matter to contact mre. I would be delighted to clarify or provide additional details. This written communication is in no way meant to preclude a meeting and full open discussion should any of you prefer.

APPROVAL SIGNATURES: COMMENTS

HUMANITIES:
MATH/SCIENCE:
EDUCATION:
FINE ARTS:
BUSINESS:
ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBER:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF STUDENT

Patricia Robinson is currently Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Brenau College in Gainesville, Georgia. She is Director of the Brenau Assessment Center and an Assistant Professor of Spanish.

Ms. Robinson was born and raised in Bangor, Maine. She received her BA in Psychology and Sociology with a minor in French from Tufts University, attending the Sorbonne in Paris, France for her senior year. She earned a master's degree in Spanish Language and Literature from Middlebury College's program in Madrid, Spain.

Prior to her affiliation with Brenau College, Ms. Robinson worked with the Agency for International Development and subsequently the office of Senator Edmund Muskie in Washington, D.C. While at Brenau, she has served as Coordinator of International Education and instructor of English as a Second Language, as well as serving on the Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, Academic Affairs and International Education Committtees.